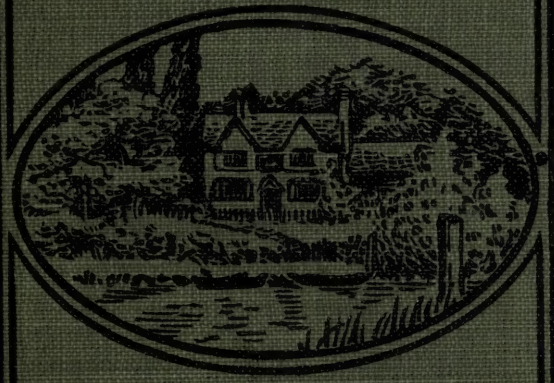
HAUNTS OF ANCIENT PEACE



ALFRED AUSTIN

HAUNTS OF ANCIENT PEACE


The MMCo.

HAUNTS OF ANCIENT PEACE

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE GARDEN THAT I LOVE," "IN VERONICA'S GARDEN"
AND "LAMIA'S WINTER-QUARTERS"

"And one, an English home . . .
A Haunt of Ancient Peace."
The Palace of Art.

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
LONDON: MACMILLAN AND CO., LTD.
1902

Set up and electrotyped October, 1902.

Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing & Co. — Berwick & Smith
Norwood Mass. U.S.A.

TO

VERONICA AND THE POET

IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THEIR CONSTANT AND AGREEABLE COMPANIONSHIP

HAUNTS OF ANCIENT PEACE

I

"How I wish," said Lamia, "we could set off on a driving expedition through England, this lovely, windless Autumn weather!"

"What!" I exclaimed, "and leave the Garden that we Love, when now it is in its consummate beauty?"

"Its consummate beauty!" replied Lamia. "Ever since I first heard of it, it has been in its consummate beauty. If you only knew how weary I am of it! Gushing enthusiasts and habitual adulators, from near and from afar; young women with their middle-aged men, bicycles, and cameras; old women with their lap-dogs and their superlatives; gentlemen from France; ladies from Germany; citizens from Chicago and Utah, the last followed by their dowdy seraglio of exasperatingly homely wives —"

"In the interest of accuracy," I ventured to interrupt, "and of the moral austerity of the voters of New York and the Eastern Seaboard, let me assure you that polygamy has for many years been abolished in Utah."

"I wonder how that was managed," she answered. "I suppose by a Divorce Bill on a generous scale, with, I trust, handsome compensation," — here Lamia looked round, to make sure, I rather suspect, that neither Veronica nor the Poet was overhearing her, — "for domestic disturbance and the victims of the latest craze. But, at any rate, prosperous citizens from somewhere, with their signed, sealed, and yet undelivered wives, for I am sure polygamy, or something uncommonly like it, must still subsist somewhere, or there could not be such a preponderance of females perpetually dragging you round your well-beloved and much-advertised Garden, and simpering attendance on your air of self-complacency, with a modest look of as much as to say, 'Alone I did it.'"

"Are you really serious," I inquired, anx-

ious to divert her humour, "in saying you want to wander at this season and—"

"Perfectly serious. I never was more serious in my life; highly serious, though I never knew any one who really had 'high seriousness,'—always excepting the Poet,—though I know several persons who have low seriousness, that most wearisome thing conceivable."

"What, then, is your ideal of proper seriousness?"

"Can you doubt it?" she rejoined. "Why, serious levity, of course, or, if you prefer to put it differently, light seriousness. I pray you cultivate it. I almost think you try to do so, but as yet with imperfect success, in some of the pages dedicated to the numerous volumes descriptive of this same Garden."

I could see she was beginning to relent, since I had bowed my head so meekly to her breeze of banter, and that she wished to pour spermaceti into my inward bruise, if she had made one, for she went on:

"Your Garden books, of course, are inimitable, especially the verses of the Poet that you cite so copiously, and that you are not re-

sponsible for, and the urns and other household virtues of Veronica, which you belaud with such touchingly fraternal admiration."

"Not to forget," I suggested, "Lamia's sprightly observations."

"Oh, I too am inimitable, am I?" she observed. "And yet I think I could imitate myself if I tried. All imitation is exaggeration, though I am well aware that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to exaggerate *my* wit, *my* originality, in a word, my inexhaustible list of gifts and graces, of which I should think people are as tired as I am, for the present, of your adorable Garden. Do you not think we might leave it to the contemplation of its own beauty? I am told that some women, and all poets, pass the greater part of their time in contemplating the beauty of their own compositions. May not gardens conceivably like to do the same? I own that yours is at present irritatingly perfect, and that is why, being so attached to it, I long to leave it. How does Veronica's favourite sonnet go?

> "Here on the summit of Love's topmost peak,
> Kiss we and part."

"Veronica's favourite sonnet!" I exclaimed. "How can you say so? It sounds much too —well, you know what I mean,—for that, whoever wrote it."

"In that case, I don't mind confessing that I did."

At this point Veronica and the Poet came across the lawn to where we were sitting; and I thought it was high time they did so.

"What has Lamia been saying?" asked Veronica. "Rebelling, I suppose, against everything in general."

"Yes," I answered, "and against the Garden that we Love in particular."

"Quite right, too," chimed in Veronica. "I am equally impatient for the first nipping frost to blight all its posies, when we shall be permitted to go indoors and devote a little time, by way of a change, to adoration of some venerable chairs, with at present only three legs, that I have lately purchased."

"And Lamia wants to start at once," I added, "from your perfectly appointed house and chairs—"

"More perfection!" murmured Lamia under her breath.

"To the Land's End, in this what, in her habitually romantic language, she described as — how did you describe it?"

"This lovely, windless, silvery-hazy season."

"Then," said Veronica, with amiable decisiveness, "it shall be done."

When Veronica says a thing shall be done, done it is, but after due foresight and preparation. It turned out, however, that something of the kind, though of more modest proportions than Lamia's wish, had been mellowing in her own mind; and so we were informed that, if it suited us, we were to be ready to start the following morning. As soon as this was announced I noticed that Lamia, instead of dedicating herself to those mysteries of female packing, which, as she once observed, can never be fathomed by the shallow male intellect, passed a goodly portion of the day in wandering with affectionate attention about the Garden, of which she had declared herself utterly weary. I had too much discretion to observe this aloud, but roamed with her in-

stead, as long as she would allow me, over lawns, among flowers, and through shrubberies, that never seem so attractive as when made additionally bewitching by her presence. The praise of consummate beauty, at which she had scoffed, I suppose without seriousness either high or low, seemed absolutely appropriate on this last day of August. For the first time — yes, for the first time, whatever I may have said before, — there are no failures, though I doubt not there are still some mistakes, in the Garden that I Love. The Poet, perhaps assisted occasionally by my older judgment, has so completely mastered the craft of making a garden such as all four of us wish to have, a still ignorant garden, if you will, not a horticultural hospital nor a floricultural museum, but a simple and sincere work of art, and an abode of beauty, that the summer would have to be a perverse one indeed that reduced it, as I have observed in so many gardens, to the condition of a desiccated blister. The child is father of the man, materially as well as spiritually, and the physical vigour of manhood and general robustness of

later life depend in no small measure on a wise yet generous diet in early years. So the ability of a garden to hold out against the possibly excessive rains of June, and the seemingly endless droughts of July and August, depends mainly on the judicious manner in which it is treated in May. On more than one occasion the Garden that I Love has been exposed to the trials just indicated, without suffering eclipse. But this year the sun and the clouds have behaved, for it at least, with unwonted consideration; and the consequence is that, as Lamia tauntingly observed, I traverse it with an air of, I daresay, provoking self-complacency. How can I help it? The enmity of the weather is resented by gardeners as much as by farmers, while its co-operation is accepted by them as a matter of course, and only a just recognition of their own superior craftsmanship. The tea-roses, that everybody has now discovered to be so hardy and self-reliant, both against the house and in their specially allotted beds, decorated June with unprecedentedly lavish and vigorous bloom; and now, in their later efflorescence, they are less astonishing in size, it is true, but

more numerous and richer-hued than ever. I can assign the palm to none, there are so many that deserve it, and they have not yet assumed the pathetic look they gradually put on when the penumbra of winter slowly advances over landscape and lawn, and casts shadows of sad anticipation over their once all-unclouded faces. Let me not, however, dwell overmuch on them, or yet on the China roses, with their delicate hues and ephemerally half-opened buds, for their variety of flower and foliage is now as striking as is their lofty stature. It is everywhere noted that the maidens of this generation are not only what I doubt not maidens always for the most part were, divinely fair, but likewise most divinely tall, partaking of the gifts of Juno Virginalis no less than of Aphrodite; and the flowers of to-day, when grown with due skill, seem to be endowed with the same towering distinction. The lilies, whether of the *speciosum*, the *auratum*, or the *tigrinum* type, are prodigious in stature, and so are the hybrid *gladioli*, and more plebeian but prolifically branching *zinnias* and *Aster sinensis*. What is the height of the Cape hyacinths and the

Japanese *anemones*, I hardly like to say, lest I should be supposed not to have escaped one of the marked foibles of to-day, habitual and emphatic exaggeration. But whether I am credited or not, we have *golden rod*, six, *dahlias*, *helianthus*, and the tall *rudbeckia*, ten, and sunflowers twelve, feet high. The hollyhocks look over the heads of this floral crowd, and some of them — why, I know not, and cannot make out — show no signs of that exasperating disease in their leaves that has of late years marred the beauty of so many of them everywhere. I confess tallness seems to me to add a crowning grace to the more stately denizens of the garden, though possibly gardeners who take pains to encourage floral growth and abundance would have a tale to tell of stakes and staking, of which the craft consists in concealing both. There are two oval beds, apart from and not within sight of each other, of which both the Poet and myself, and indeed more critical Veronica as well, are particularly enamoured, and which, this first year of their existence, are more or less experimental. They were beautiful on May-day, when we returned from

Lamia's Winter-Quarters; they were beautiful through June and July; they are beautiful still; each successive kind of shrub and plant and flower which they contain having been equally successful, as though one and all of them had been inspired with generous emulation. They were made afresh last November, deeply and repeatedly dug over before anything was put into them, and well-chopped turf and rich loam entered largely into their composition. I will not describe them, even could I do so; but I think they alone were worthy of those polygamous visits, of which Lamia spoke, any day during the last four months. Everywhere throughout the garden, either obvious or more or less concealed, are mignonette and heliotrope; and on walls, whether facing north, south, west, or east, there is homely, old-fashioned jessamine, like the note of Wordsworth's stock-dove, "slow to begin but never ending," so that an all-pervading perfume seems the soul and vital spirit of the place.

And now I have done, here at least, with the Garden that I am touched to think so many

persons love, and with what Lamia calls my self-complacency ; for it will be found, by those who care to go on with it, that this discursive volume has little or nothing to do, save incidentally, with that now somewhat threadbare theme.

The following morning ushered in September in the most auspicious manner. I awoke about half-past five and looked out. In the very height and heat of summer an absolutely cloudless sky is neither the most agreeable nor the most becoming of weather conditions. Summer clouds, not charged with threat of storm, or rain, or wind, not dense and gloomy, but here and there dappling the sky and tempering the burning rays of the sun, are an indispensable accompaniment of perfect summer beauty and summer enjoyment; and that is why, in June, July, and August, people prefer the latitude and climate of these Islands to those of the seductive land where Lamia, with the rest of us as her devoted attendants, lately had her abode. But when outdoor well-established peaches redden on old brick walls ; when hollyhocks and tiger-lilies are in full

beauty; when roses begin, not to wane, but to take on them a more pensive look, to be less demonstrative, more reserved, more fastidious, so to speak, more unostentatious and dignified; when the whole garden has a less vainglorious air, as of one who no longer struggles to do himself justice now that he has succeeded, and ample justice has been done him by others; when pears and plums and other mellow juicy fruits are as plentiful as blackberries; when the rooks return from their day's excursion to the marsh with a slower, longer-drawn caw, and take more time in settling down to their nests in the great, tall, motionless trees; when stubble alternates with drying sheaves, early corn-stacks, or rocking, murmuring wheat-fields awaiting the reaper, and in places hop-poles are already down, while in gardens of the later sorts, women and children are busy among the rows and the big brown baskets; when woodbine and bramble are the chief flowers for the hedgerows maiden's-bower has not entirely monopolised, and blue succory, lavender-coloured scabious, and golden hawkweed tend to oust other blooms from the hedge-bottoms; when

days wax shorter and twilight comes on less furtively and hesitatingly; then the utter absence of cloud seems to lengthen out the summer and stave off the slowly approaching gravity of Autumn.

It was a morning that seemed to promise such a day, when I looked out with the hope of finding signs favourable to our intended driving tour; for the Autumnal season of the year, like that of human beings, is less capricious and more to be counted on than April winsomeness or midsummer's too often stormy impulses. The sun was just on the point of rising into a sky that everywhere was cloudless, and copious dew glistened on lawn and leaf. A covey of partridges, "little victims unconscious of their doom," personally conducted by their parents, were marching with graceful confidence from flower-bed to flower-bed, for a few moments lost to sight, and then one by one emerging again into the glimmering grass. Suddenly there was a whirr of wings, and away they floated over the orchard boundary into the meadows beyond, in search of safe, convenient cover. But they were at once

replaced by something yet more graceful, something that fastened and fascinated my gaze still more. It was Lamia, who, at this early hour, and little suspecting her sunrise saunter was witnessed by admiring eyes, was taking leave of the Garden for a time in a farewell visit. She was bare-headed, and, if the whole truth must be told, bare-footed as well. She wore a light-coloured garment I had never before seen, and, therefore, as a male ignoramus in such matters, am quite incapable of describing; and her abundant tresses fell over it in waves unconfined.

. . . . Her brow was bare,
And rippled from her radiant hair
The glow and glory of the dawn.

Slowly and deliberately she walked from flower-bed to flower-bed, now halting to stoop towards some favourite rose, now burying and bedewing her face in the fragrant bells of the datura or the still wide-open blooms of the sweet-scented tobacco-plants. It was a loving pilgrimage she was making round the Garden, that, on the day before, she had told me she was heartily weary of, but which I suspect she

loves more truly and tenderly than any of us. When it came to a close, she stood for a moment in the middle of the lawn, kissed her hand in each direction, walked back gravely into the house, and vanished. Was there ever in the world another being so loving, so lovable?

I shall not set down here any information about the arrangements that were made for our excursion, since I doubt if any one would care to imitate them; and, if you have not unqualified confidence in the foresight and executive talents of Veronica, much that I have written has been written in vain, and I have failed to give you a just conception of her exceptionally helpful gifts. Moreover, the conveyances, the animals, the baggage, the packing, the hundred-and-one things that are indispensable to a successful driving tour, can be assumed, and, notwithstanding their importance, are the least part of the true elements of vagrant enchantment. The companions and their conversation, their frame of mind and capacity for enjoyment, are the chief matter, after all; and Lamia, to say nothing of the Poet, are not to be had for

the asking, nor yet for the paying for. There are, I am aware, many poets; at least so I am told. But there is only one Lamia; and of her we have a monopoly, thanks to her touching fidelity to the Poet, to my, I am well aware, servile adoration of her, and to Veronica's indulgent toleration.

"Are you never a little jealous of her?" asked a tactless person, the other day, of Veronica.

I know no one who can so well rebuke with perfect courtesy an ill-advised observation; so the prompt reply was:

"Jealous of Lamia? The Poet is perfectly devoted to her, and she to him; and so, I have no manner of doubt, she is of the greatest possible service to him, as, I trust, I too am in my own perhaps humbler but equally disinterested way. And, if ever I think you also could make him happier, assist his imagination, stimulate his mind, and set his voice singing, you may be quite sure I should ask you to pay us a much longer visit than I fear will be possible to-day, for they are both waiting for me to go out driving with them."

Could anything have been more courteously caustic?

Neither do I propose to give any indication of our itinerary, or yet of the names of places where we made our various halts, had our various conversations, visited Haunts of Ancient Peace, and sojourned, when we would, for so many days. But those who know England well will, I imagine, be able to give a fairly good guess as to the local habitation and the name of them all, or, at any rate, of most of them; and, even if sometimes they are out in their reckoning, what does it matter? "Think it so, and so it is;" and, just as a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, so a slowly mouldering ruin, a village "the world forgetting, by the world forgot," a humble, pious parsonage, a semi-feudal Castle, do not lose their charm or their dignity, because the material imagination calls them by a wrong appellation. Is it not enough to say, "What a heavenly spot, what a divine place! How copiously the Poet talked to-day after their in-the-open-air mid-day meal! Verily Lamia surpassed herself yesterday in sportive levity, in

mirthful melancholy, in electric sympathy, in illuminating paradox!" If sometimes you feel like that concerning what I have to tell, and I shall offer you only what seems to me the cream, such as it is, of all that happened to us, the obscure narrator will be well content.

"I trust it is thoroughly understood," said Lamia, when we were a few miles from home, "since the following ten days, fortnight, or three weeks, whichever it may be, are to be dedicated, in a sacrificial spirit, entirely to my delectation, and no other member of the party will have any enjoyment save the exhilarating sense of benevolent altruism, that I shall be taken nowhere, see nothing, and converse with nobody, that is not ancient. I wish to see *Old* England, or so much of it as is left."

"Yet," I ventured to plead, for this particular conversation was between Lamia and me only, "is there not much in it that is more or less new, well worth seeing, and strongly appealing to the intelligent mind?"

"That may or may not be. Not being myself intelligent, but radically, or should I not rather say conservatively, stupid, I cannot say.

But there is one thing I do know, which is known but to few, especially to few women, I know what I want; and I do not want paper-mills with the newest machinery for turning the pages of yesterday's immortal works into fresh paper on which to print the equally enduring works of to-morrow. I can equally dispense with tubular bridges, whatever they may happen to be, the latest thing in motor-cars, model farms, and elementary schools conducted on an entirely novel system, in which everything is taught except the elements of sound morals and good manners, and the rudiments of universal knowledge are instilled, which resolutely refuse to take root in the mind of the bucolic British boy. May I hope, too, that now Peace has happily been restored throughout His Majesty's dominions, we may see no newspapers older than Addison's *Spectator?*"

We had got down to gather a hedge posy, and at this point of the conversation Veronica and the Poet, who had been similarly employed not far off, joined us; when Lamia, not changing the theme, but somewhat altering its tone, continued:

"I confess I crave for the urbanity of the Past, for feminine serviceableness, for washing-days, home-made jams, lavender bags, recitation of Gray's *Elegy*, and morning and evening prayers. One is offered, in place of them, ungraceful hurry and worry, perpetual postman's knocks, an intermittent shower of telegrams, reply not paid, dithyrambic vulgarity or life-not-worth-living lamentations, and individual infallibility accompanied by universal incredulity. Look round at this rustic old-world scene. Work is going on everywhere, but how quietly, how undemonstratively! Tell me, Veronica, we shall stay nowhere except at old Inns, shall we, or with old people, and give utterance to none but the very oldest and most out-of-fashion ideas."

The country, the villages, the parks, the hamlets, through which we passed, when we resumed our progress, fully answered to Lamia's description, and must surely have satisfied her desire. We seemed to have got beyond the range of corrugated iron farm-sheds and barbed wire. There were generous breadths of grass on either side, between the

roadway and the hedges. The latter were allowed to have some little will and way of their own, the cottages stood well back from highway or lane, looked solid, sturdy, and weather-tight, though of vague antiquity; and the folk inside them, though I daresay thrifty enough, had spared time to cultivate unremunerative flowers, and money enough to invest in white paint and muslin curtains, so as to give to their windows, above and below, a look of comeliness and care. Here and there, children yet too young to attend those elementary schools on which Lamia had been so severe, were munching apples as rosy as their own cheeks, or harmlessly chasing geese that were growing more unwieldy and waddled still more ungracefully as the year moved nearer to Michaelmas Day, and betook themselves with much cackling from their infantine tormentors to the nearest pond. The village Churches bore to the carelessly passing eye a strong family likeness, though the architectural *virtuoso* could discern at a glance certain differences in window, buttress, or porch, that left to each one its own sufficiently defined individuality

and story. To any village Vicar or Rector we met going his pastoral rounds, we made due obeisance, which was returned with Christian courtesy; and, if we drew up for a moment for local information or guidance, we invariably went forward knowing something more than heretofore.

One cannot well drive about England with one's eyes open, without observing indication after indication of the strong, independent individuality of the English character, which may yet prove our best safeguard against that exotic "Collectivism" of which we hear so much. The very landscape, its shapeless fields, its irregular hedgerows, its winding and wayward roads, its accidental copses, its arbitrariness of form and feature, are a silent but living protest against uniformity and preconceived or mechanical views of life. Who divided these fields? Who marked out these roads? No one did. They divided and marked out themselves just as strong characters divide and sever themselves from others, settle their own boundaries, and define irregularly their own place and position. A square field you will

no more find in an English landscape than a round one. They are all informal, swerving and sweeping in and out in a manner unaccountable, which endows each of them with life and a kind of personality. The very lanes meander and zigzag so, you might almost think their course had been decided by the steps of some of our deeply drinking Saxon ancestors, whose legs were more or less unsteady as they wended homeward after a day's thatching or threshing. That this irregularity of the landscape, so delightful to look on, is accompanied by a good deal of waste, from the economist's point of view, may be true enough. We are a thriftless people. But is not our unthriftiness part of our masculinity, part of the negligent bigness in the national character, which feels it can afford to be heedless of trifles and details, and in any case will on no account be reduced to slavish formality? Like the Poet, England was born, not made, and has grown in its own lavish, wide-spreading fashion.

That everything in English country life is a growth, not a mechanism, may be seen again

in the diversity of aspect worn by its various counties. An accurate observer of Nature ought to be able to tell, within a day or two, without any calendar to help him, what day of the year it is; and he will equally be able to surmise what county of England he is in without the aid of map or guide-book. Why should Sussex be utterly unlike Kent? I will answer the question, when any one tells me why one Englishman is unlike any other Englishman. We are hewn, not sawn, and no Consular Dictator with a Code has decreed that we shall be this, or do that, or that our dear old haphazard land shall be divided into departments. How many classes are there in England? I do not know. Attempt to define them, and you will soon find yourself in a difficulty. I almost think there are as many classes as men, and certainly there are as many classes as counties. Passing from Kent to Sussex is like passing from one society to another. Kent is softer, — I do not mean in climate, but in aspect, — more refined, more careful of itself, a little more self-conscious; in a word, more civilised. Sussex once had its

iron-works, as its hammer-ponds to this day testify; but these have disappeared, and Sussex seems well pleased to have got rid of them. There is a rooted rusticity in Sussex folk, which would ill accord with manufacture of any sort. I was pleased to find they all "touched their hats," — as, may I be allowed to say, why should they not? They never heard of Goethe's three reverences: reverence for what is above one, reverence for what is below one, and reverence for oneself. But generations ago they silently reached the same conclusion, and have not yet abandoned it. I know there are parts of England where "touching the hat" would now be regarded as a trait of servility. In the name of the sweet charities of life, why? I imagine every well-mannered Member of the House of Commons takes his hat off to the Speaker when he meets him, and calls him "Sir." It is painful to me to pass a fellow-creature in a country lane or, for that matter, on a high road, and pass and be passed by him as though neither had any existence for the other. If proudly ignoring each other be a proof of independence,

I prefer a little sweet servility. Unhappy the man who does not serve somebody! Surely the most beautiful and redeeming title of the Pope of Rome is *Servus Servorum Dei*, the Servant of the servants of God.

"Shall we pass, or go near, Field Place?" asked Lamia. "I fear not," said Veronica; "to do so would take us twelve or fifteen miles out of our way, and that would rather interfere with the plan and promises made for to-day. We will make a pilgrimage there some other time!"

"When I last was there," said the Poet, "now a dozen or more years back, I remember thinking at the time I had never seen a more complete example of a haunt of eighteenth-century peace. There was nothing to remind you of the musical young arraigner of gods and men. You expected rather to meet Cowper pacing the red-walled garden-paths, composing 'The Task,' to see Mrs. Unwin coming out of the Georgian hall to bring him a comforter if the air was chill, or to hear Lady Austen playing on the harpsichord a serene melody of Mozart, breathing wise content with

things in general. The very gravel-paths were completely overgrown with moss, — purposely, I have no doubt; for I never saw a more charming harmony in natural green than that of the moss on the path, that of the sward on each side of it, and that of the trees overhanging both. The whole place looked as though Shelley had never existed; nay, as though the French Revolution had never occurred. Wherever Shelley may have left his mark, he has left none on his birthplace. When I had first visited Horsham, there was no allusion to him in the several mural tablets to his people in the Parish Church. There is one to the grandfather, Sir Bysshe, and his wife, and on it is inscribed, 'Their eldest son erected this tablet.' That eldest son was Sir Timothy, the poet's father, who lived to be ninety-one, dying in 1844; and 'his relict Elizabeth,' who died two years later at the age of eighty-three, erected another tablet, 'in testimony of love and respect for him while living, and of the regret she feels for his loss.' Evidently they were all pious, God-fearing people, cherishing the domestic graces and tendernesses of

life, and attaching deep, silent value to love and respect. During the twenty-two years that his parents survived him, did they ever talk of their wayward and, as they must doubtless have thought, erring son? Most persons who have of late years written about Shelley, have dwelt on his exiled life and his touching death, and, either explicitly or by implication, have conveyed the impression that his people were hard, narrow-minded folk, who treated him with shameful injustice. But is there not some lack of imagination, and likewise of equity, here? It is all very well for those who were not Shelley's father, mother, sister, wife, nor kin of his of any kind, to rejoice in his beautiful verse and in the impulsively generous qualities of which he certainly was not devoid. But can they not understand that an old-fashioned English couple of gentle birth and dutiful traditions, who feared God, honoured the king, and looked on marriage as something made sacred by 'love and respect,' must have been pained, beyond all Shelley's powers of expression, by the ever-present thought that a son of theirs had advocated Atheism, Republicanism,

and something strongly resembling Free-Love? Genius such as Shelley's is so bewitching that it may champion any doctrine it likes, and will yet be forgiven by the world at large. But the mother who suckled him? But the father whose name he bore, and who had himself inherited the name through generations of pious, loyal, scrupulous men and women? Thus it may well be that, as they walked slowly together round that moss-grown Sussex garden, or sat opposite each other by the family fireside, when winds were cold and wet without, they never mentioned the son that had disappeared from them long before the waters of the Mediterranean closed over him. But now you may read, in Horsham Church, and hard-by the tablets I have named, another inscription, which simply says —

> 'Percy Bysshe Shelley,
> Born iv. August, 1792.
> Died viii. July, 1822.'

The rest is silence, — a judicious silence. It helps to make of Horsham Sanctuary a haunt of ancient peace."

As we meandered on by highway or byway, next to tardily ripening wheat fields were meadows of just-cut summer-smelling aftermath, and hop-gardens, half of which were being actively picked, while the other half, that still had towering bine and pendent clusters of fruit untouched, had for neighbours drying corn-stooks waiting to be carried away. Hedges, sheltering them from those supposed equinoctial gales that have an untimely trick of sometimes blowing for three days in the very middle of August, broke, without hindering the view; and tall, wide-spreading umbrageous trees, whose timber in this age of iron has ceased to be profitable, were still spared in this reverent England of ours because of their age and beauty. It was the holiday season, so dear to the "bucolic British boy" of whom Lamia spoke, and who offers so resisting a mind to information offered him through books, though it is accessible enough to instruction vouchsafed him by animal and vegetable nature, by fields, trees, birds, and reptiles. As a convinced Darwinian would say, he takes a lively interest in his ancestors, without feeling much respect for them, and, though

not knowing it, is a curious student of genealogy. At present he was released from scholastic teaching in order to complete his education out of doors, and at the same to add in some degree to the family income, on which his fathomless appetite and passion for rough places cause him to draw so heavily. Those of his sisters who were old enough for the purpose were similarly employed, though the observation they could steal from hop-picking was devoted to somewhat different objects from those that distracted the attention of their brothers; for while these were looking up to catch sight of a hawk, down, to discover the self-betraying traces of a hare, rabbit, or weasel, and round, on the chance of espying a cock pheasant or a squirrel, the girls, without ceasing to strip the lowered hop-bines, took stock of the bodices, the skirts, the hair, the cuffs, the collars of their elder female companions. Fields of roots, mangolds, turnips, and swedes were not wanting to rural completeness; but, though ever and anon a covey of birds flew up from or settled covertly down among these, it was not that rather charm-lacking thing, a partridge

country, whose attractiveness for the good shot is not so keenly felt by the more romantic rambler. But it was the fruit-laden orchards that conferred the most enchanting feature on the scenes through which we passed, the most peaceful, the most ancient, for nearly all of them were old, though still vigorous in bough and branch and generous in fruit-bearing, a survival of the days of cider brewing and home-grown everything. Veronica, commenting on the crooked and leaning character of many of them, observed that their early training had been imperfect; while Lamia tentatively asked if something had not been gained for them, and for us as well, by their having been allowed, in supple childhood, to follow their own bent and inclination. The fruit had not yet begun to fall, or even to fill the air with the aroma of their ripeness, but they had taken on every shade and gradation of colour, from apple-green to mellow russet, or that blushing crimson which Lamia attributed to the self-conscious shame of their progenitor in paradise, on the initiation of our inquisitive first mother into naughtiness; since which time, the Poet added,

perhaps to shield her from Veronica's possible reprobation, boys have to be taught the knowledge of good and evil, whereas girls come into the world with an instinctive knowledge of it. In the orchards nearest to the villages, the very young children who shared in the general emancipation from book learning, thanks to the harvest season, moved about below the trees, jumping or struggling up to the apples they fondly imagined they might reach by perseverance.

It was in an orchard a little remote from village or hamlet that we elected to have the luncheon which Veronica had packed for us, in such a haunt of ancient peace, that we spread rug and tablecloth, took our lowly seats, and helped ourselves and each other to what we wanted.

"I trust," said Veronica, "you will all make the most of your present opportunity, for, in consequence of Lamia's insistence on bed and board of hoar antiquity, you will dine, or sup, or not sup, but at least sleep, to-night, at an inn of the most primitive manners and customs."

"I am not afraid!" exclaimed Lamia, "though

I am not aware that I have ever exhibited anything either of the austerity or of the lenten appetite of the anchorite; nor have I observed any such weakness in the Poet in his very finest frenzy. But I have the utmost confidence in the capacity of any country inn in this part of the Realm to produce, at very short notice, hare soup, prodigal apologies for the absence of fish, a brace of young partridges shot betimes this morning, or perhaps yesterday, a colossal dish containing a hot farinaceous pudding cooked in unwatered milk, a bowl filled to the brim with bright-coloured late cherries or early plums, and cream, as they used to say when we were still in the French part of the Riviera, at discretion. I can survey it all with the far-seeing vision. But I trust, Veronica, we shall not be defrauded, out of excessive deference to my old English tastes, of our five-o'clock tea."

"That, you will have in an old English Rectory."

"I trust, *old English*, will not, in this case, be a figure of speech, and that we shall not be treated, thanks to one of those ecclesiastical in-

novations which some persons regard as agreeable evidence of the march of intellect, to a Prayer Meeting either before or after it, followed by a collection for the conversion of the Heathen whom we are so anxious to clothe with cheap shirtings, flamboyant umbrellas, and decorous beads."

"We shall see," said Veronica.

"I ventured to ask," pursued Lamia, "because, when one is offered hospitality, one never can quite foresee what is going to happen to one. Being, as you know, partial to *al-fresco* entertainments, I the other day rashly accepted an invitation to what was luringly described as a modest picnic; and, when I reached the spot indicated in the invitation, I saw, somewhat to my alarm, a long table, two rows of chairs, and a white tablecloth covered with glittering knives and forks, napkins in fantastic shapes, and a mixed array of silver goblets, — I am not sure they were not silver-gilt, — and glass ornaments filled with orchids, and other hothouse-grown flowers; and gentlemen — I believe *gentlemen* is their proper designation — in white calves and whitened heads, opening innumerable ham-

pers. I looked furtively round to see if there was yet time to retrace my steps and fly. But at that moment I was hailed with boisterous clamours of welcome, and I had to go through it all, the newest courses, and the oldest jokes, over and over again reiterated, borrowed from the Music Halls and the Theatres, where pieces run for three hundred and one nights, and are each time greeted with inextinguishable laughter."

"Poor Lamia!" said Veronica; "we can only hope that the humbler meal will enable you to cast the veil of oblivion over those horrors."

"This humbler *al-fresco* luncheon," added the Poet, "recalls to me the one we had together under the olive and carob trees, with the austere mountains behind and the smiling Mediterranean in front of us, and, all around, sprouting corn, burgeoning fig-trees, blossoming almonds, and scarlet wild anemones."

"This is just as delightful," said Lamia, "in its way, and, while there is austerity nowhere, the sun smiles through the heavily laden branches of this ancient orchard. Nothing so attractive

and soothing as a smile. I must confess the one thing I have most missed since we returned from our Winter-Quarters is the smile there always is, either abidingly there, or at a moment's notice ready to break, on Italian faces. In England peasant folk rarely, and never habitually, smile. They either look grave, or they laugh."

"A true distinction," I observed, with the utmost sincerity, and then took more courage than is customary with me, where Lamia is concerned, to add, "a circumstance that I am glad has been recalled, since it enables me to make the gratifying disclosure that Lamia has written some stanzas on this very subject."

The look that came over her face at this ebullition of boldness, though not a frown, was certainly not a smile, until, after Veronica had vainly petitioned to hear them, the Poet came to our aid, saying:

"I am sure you will not refuse so unanimous and so respectful a request. I have often, too often perhaps, had to comply with similar requests on your part, and therefore you cannot and, I am sure, will not refuse this one."

Whereupon the *disiato riso*, the much-desired charm, stole over her face, and she repeated the following stanzas in her simplest manner:

THE MAIDEN OF THE SMILE

I

In that fair Land where slope and plain
Shine back to sun and sky,
And olives shield the sprouting grain
When wintry arrows fly,
Where snow-fed streams seek sun-warmed vale
Through vineyard-scarped defile,
The world we enter with a wail
She greeted with a smile.

II

Slumbering She smiled, and smiling woke,
And, when She felt the smart
Of grave sad life, smiles still bespoke
Her tenderness of heart.
And nightly when She knelt and prayed
Beside her snow-white bed,
Her face was one pure smile that made
A heaven about her head.

III

When Love first trembled in her ear
The heart-throbs that beguile,
She listened with assenting tear,
Then chased it with a smile.
Anguish and loss with smiles She bore
Unto her latest breath;
But the sweetest smile She ever wore
Was the smile She wore in death.

"I have obeyed without demur; but I trust no one will think the verses worthy either of recitation or remembrance."

"In so far," said the Poet, "as I am any judge, they have a tear in them as well as a smile; and by their directness and simplicity at least are much better worth reciting than many I have often been asked to commend, and was unable to admire because of their far-fetched artificiality."

"Were they written, Lamia," asked Veronica, who showed the most sympathetic interest in them, "with ease?"

"I fear they were," was the modest reply, "or they would hardly have been written at all, being quite unworthy of serious or sustained labour."

"I think you have uttered," said the Poet, "only a half-truth. A rather unintelligent person asked me, the other day, if writing poetry was not very difficult; and, at first a little embarrassed, I answered, when I had recovered self-possession, that I should think it was either very easy or utterly impossible."

I could see the conversation was lingering too long in the neighbourhood, so to speak, of Lamia's verses to be welcome to her, so she tactfully diverted its course by saying:

"Talking of smiles, did you not notice that the actors and actresses — for such, we all agreed, they manifestly were — who were making the acquaintance of the little country town through which we passed an hour ago, and where, as conspicuous wall-posters announced, they are to appear this evening, all wore a sort of smile on their faces? That is one of the attractions of their profession."

"It needs," said Veronica, "all the attractions it can muster in order to counteract what I should have thought its disadvantages."

"Yet is not," asked the Poet, "the word attractive the very one that is applicable to it?

for we all feel drawn to it in one way or another. It would be easy to cite its drawbacks; but every career has those. What we must all admire, I think, in actors and actresses is their kindliness, their helpfulness to one another in hours of need, and their ready response to any appeal made to them to assist in alleviating individual or class suffering. They are a compassionate set of people, and their promptest tears are not those they shed on the stage."

"And yet," I urged, "I do not know any vocation that is more frequently abused or more hastily decried. It was my fate, not long ago, to hear it assailed by a virtuous person with the sweeping condemnation that too frequently mars the reprehensions of respectability. A little later, on the same occasion, I had to listen to an equally intolerant judgment, passed by some one else, on the Jews. I held my peace, for extravagance of assertion reduces one to silence. But I could not help reflecting afterwards that the most far-seeing and the most sagaciously patriotic of modern English statesmen was a Jew, and the incontestably greatest of English writers an actor."

"Yes," said the Poet, "a reflection that might make people pause in their too comprehensive indictments. But I fear that of late both exaggeration and acrimony have been on the increase; exaggeration on all subjects, and increase of acrimony, national, racial, political, literary, and theological. Perhaps it is only a passing reaction from the theoretical toleration that was, a little while ago, in the ascendant."

"But," pleaded Veronica, "surely you would not, before judges wholly free from acrimony or prejudice, care to accept a brief on behalf of the existing British stage."

"Perhaps not; but my reluctance would not arise from an ill opinion of the actors themselves. But one might urge, perchance not without truth, that in the higher spheres of the histrionic craft they have something to learn."

"Why is that?" I inquired.

"Is it not because they have not many opportunities of practising it?"

"And why is that, again?" I persisted.

"Surely it is because, while the occupants of the Gallery but imperfectly apprehend, and therefore rather dislike, the higher dramatic

Art to which form and colour, but colour in due subordination to, and co-ordination with, the other elements, music and poetry, otherwise Literature, must all be contributory, the occupants of the Stalls positively loathe it, and only here and there a few scattered persons in the Pit and Dress Circle appreciate and love it. The sculptor, the painter, the musical composer, the narrative or lyrical poet, can afford to follow his own bent, to please himself, and to take his chance of pleasing others, which is, of course, the proper method. If they succeed in more or less pleasing themselves by keeping before them their own Ideal of their Art, but fail thereby to please others, their loss is slight; and were they, by abandoning or lowering their Ideal, to succeed in pleasing others, their material gain would, as a rule, be but moderate, and they would pay heavily for it by acquiring, and deserving, their own self-contempt. But the management of a theatre is a serious pecuniary matter, and no theatre can prosper that produces plays people will not go to see."

"Are we not thus on the track," asked Veronica, "of the reason why the higher and more

imaginative English men-of-letters rarely write, and still more rarely see produced, dramatic works for the stage?"

"Unquestionably," said the Poet. "Sum up for us, Lamia, for I am sure you can, the reason and the result in a brief sentence."

Without hesitating a moment, Lamia said: "The alienation of the author from the audience, and the indifference of English society, from the highest to the lowest, to the loftier Literature."

* * * * * * *

I noticed a deepening anxiety on Lamia's face as the hour drew near at which Veronica said we should arrive at the Rectory, where Tea was awaiting us; evidently because she could not dispel from her mind the doubt whether the unconverted Heathen would not play the leading part in it. Once or twice, as we approached a village, she asked, "Is this the place?" receiving for answer that it was not. Suddenly the Poet said, "Here we are, are we not?"

No village was visible, no hamlet, no Church even, no house, no Rectory. All the same, we

made a sharp turn to the left from the cross-country road along which we were driving, ascended some thirty yards of a roughish-made lane, caught sight of a Church tower and the ripe-red roofs of a dwelling-house through some trees of magnificent growth, and, descending warily a grass-grown path, had the mystery solved and our bourne revealed to us. Sign of village or hamlet there still was none; but a fourteenth-century Church, with contiguous God's-acre, and quiet-looking Rectory and surrounding old-world garden, were now well within view; and, from under the shelter, in the paddock outside this last, of what Lamia exclaimed was the most splendid horse-chestnut she had ever seen, came forward to greet us a gravely cheerful clergyman, and at his side a young, fair, simply dressed girl in the heyday of maidenhood, whom one rightly surmised to be his daughter. He was an old acquaintance of the Poet's, though the two had not met for several years, and he welcomed us in a manner at once pastoral and genial. The girl, whose address was a little shy, but not embarrassed, and partook of that modesty which is winsome in youth

and captivating even in age, selecting Lamia as the one whom she could at first most freely talk with, asked her with a smile, made sweeter round the mouth by a slight heightening of the colour on her cheek, if she would like to see the Church. "I think that would be best," said her father, "as that will give time for tea to be got ready. But may I first ask you to look at this tree, which they tell me — but every spot has its self-flattering legend — is the largest of its kind throughout England?"

We all agreed, with absolute sincerity, that it was prodigious; larger in girth, burlier in bough, more shapely and further-branching in dome, than any we could recall in our various journeyings.

"Once on a time" — what an enduring charm those old words have! — "this was part of a Royal Chase, whose limits ranged as far as the distant horizon we to-day can see so plainly. Only that one other well-timbered tree, colossal in reality, though dwarfed by this one, has with it surveyed the vicissitudes to which man and nature alike are subject."

"How is it," asked Veronica, "that no

dwelling-house is near, much less any sign of a village ? "

" The nearest," he replied, " is a mile and a half away ; but there are several small hamlets in my parish, which is a large one, and requires the services of a stout cob or a strong pair of legs. Happily, I have at least the latter."

We walked through the meadow grass towards the Church, Lamia and her newly made young friend leading the way ; and I thought how " English " they looked, though of a different date from the lowly porch, aisle-windows, and beacon-surmounted tower close at hand. The solid keys carried by the Rector's daughter were not needed to admit us inside the building ; and, on entering, one at once saw that, not recently, but in more evil days, the well-intentioned but tasteless restorer had been blunderingly engaged on it. Apology was made for this by the Rector, who pleaded in extenuation that the irreparable reparation had taken place much before his time, but hoped enough was left of the better original to be deserving of a visit. This was so ; and the wiser vision instinctively passes from the demerits to the merits

of what he is gazing on, being not a fault-finder but a beauty-seeker. I defy the most polemical layman or drum-beating ecclesiastic to have discerned traces of either the Scarlet Lady or the ascetic anti-sacerdotalist in its decorous sanctuary and scrupulously cared-for nave and transept. It looked essentially a House of Prayer and haunt of ancient peace, having about it that unasserting air of sanctity which reminded one of Pope's unusually tender couplet:

> On her white breast a jet-black Cross she wore,
> Which Jews might kiss and Infidels adore.

Some of the old monuments had suffered sad havoc either from destructive or from restoring hands; and four couchant lions of roughly hewn make, that had been rescued in fragments from the churchyard, were without the pillars and canopy they doubtless once upbore. But there were other tombs that had escaped iconoclast and repairing architect alike, where half-mailed figures lay in stony dumbness, and inscriptions, deciphered with difficulty, spoke briefly of brave, sagacious, duty-doing, duty-command-

ing men, and pious, chaste, obedient women, who, though neither heard in the market-place nor visible in the polling-booth, brought up their children in the fear of God, loyalty to the Sovereign, the love of man, and tender compassion for the labouring and the lowly.

"I see no signs of the unconverted Heathen," I whispered to Lamia as we entered the Rectory Garden, and saw Tea set out under a beech-tree, evidently for a limited company. Lamia vouchsafed no answer, but exclaimed aloud instead:

"Now, that is the sort of garden *I* love."

No one, in whom the modern passion for tidiness and trimness has not extinguished the instantaneous satisfaction and refreshing sense as of summer dew that fall on one at the sight of a secluded Rectory or Vicarage Garden, well and evidently long stocked with the sweet-smelling and generously lavish flowers that never go out of fashion, could have failed to agree with Lamia's exclamation. The Rector explained to us, not with any tone or air of apology, but as hospitably giving us an interesting piece of local history, that his predecessor was a man

of considerable private means, who, maintaining the less ecclesiastical traditions of a former day, drove a four-in-hand, no doubt along a lane and down an incline then better paved and kept than now, had several gardeners, and had therefore made a garden much larger than was needed to-day, and than he and his daughter, with the help of a simple old parishioner, could properly tend.

"*He* was the home-grown Heathen, then," said Lamia to me aside, "and has disappeared."

Though not overhearing the remark, but as if to temper its severity, the Rector went on to say that, none the less, he was the kindest and most helpful of rural clergymen, with a quick ear and a ready hand to help the honest folk he regarded as his particular flock.

"I was his curate for eighteen years, and, to my surprise, and at first a little to my embarrassment, was nominated his successor when he died. But the just-judging rustic labourer, and indeed the poor generally, always make allowance for altered circumstances; much more so than, I fear, do gardens, that rapidly show an altered aspect when less lavishly treated."

"I wish," said Lamia, "some of them were treated with the comparative neglect that accounts for much of the fascination of this one."

"You speak, kind young lady," said the Rector, "only a half-truth, as those frequently do who, happily for themselves and for others, have yet much experience to go through. Is not the whole or nearly the whole truth rather this, that the charm of a half-neglected old garden arises from its having, once on a time, not been neglected? Ursula and I could never have imparted to it — could we, Ursula? — the charm that I own we both sometimes feel it possesses. You must have remarked, or, were you here long, you could not fail to remark, that the memory of persons going down, as Byron says, the vale of years, not unoften fails them at need. But, in so far as such people arrest and interest our attention, is it not because we perceive that they once knew more than they now quite recollect, and retain in their modest homes something of the classic piety of Oxford or the more severe erudition of its sister University? It is the same, I

suspect, with this garden. If it still be beautiful, it is because it once was more so."

"I am sure," said the Poet, "we all feel the truth and appositeness of your week-day homily. But I do not recall a College garden either on the Cam or the Isis that can claim more venerable distinction, or more power to captivate and impress the mind, than this one."

"Thanks," added Veronica, "I am sure, in no small measure, to the Head Gardener's Daughter, whom" — taking her hand — "I should like to be allowed to call Ursula."

The house, which, like the garden, was larger than the needs of its present occupants, was of seemly rather than strikingly picturesque architecture, and was indebted for its external pleasantness mainly to the climbers that half veiled it. Within, it wore a look of refinement that owed nothing to recent expenditure, and just as little to a desire to excite astonishment or admiration. But Veronica was quick to discover a number of interesting and valuable curios, books, prints, china, mementoes of a quiet, unostentatious Past. With the kindest intention in the world she assured the

Rector and Ursula that some of these were materially as valuable as they were deserving of serious examination; probably thinking that it was just possible their "money's worth" might be, at some time or another, of use to the owner. But he only observed:

"So I have been told, more than once. But they seem to have become part of ourselves; and ourselves we have to retain, for better, for worse. Ursula periodically dusts them with jealous care."

Passing once more into the garden, we seated ourselves at the meal Lamia had once looked forward to with dread, but now evidently was prepared to enjoy as thoroughly as is possible to her when circumstances enjoin her to be on what she calls her Veronesque behaviour.

Ursula took the earliest opportunity, when Tea was over, of luring Lamia away, to show her, she said, her own particular bit of garden, but, one well knew, in order to indulge freely in the companionship of another young girl, whom it was plain she already devotedly admired; while we older ones remained where we were.

"Have you any difficulty," asked the Poet, "with the people of your parish on those questions, which one regrets to see the controversial inflammability of the time has once more set alight, and that burn so readily?"

"You mean questions of dogma and ritual, I suppose?" The Poet indicated assent by an inclination of the head, so the Rector went on. "None whatever; for one takes care to keep fuel and fire apart. Why should they be brought together? In large towns it is not so easy, from the growing habit of constant discussion, and where almost every opinion is trying to get itself accepted as public or prevailing opinion, for a clergyman to perform his duties without being dragged or entrapped, however unwillingly, into betraying his personal inclination in these grave matters. But in the country, happily, one need not stir sleeping dogs. As a rule, the rustic mind is a moderate mind, what is called a conservative mind, in regard to whatever may happen to be the views and practices he has been accustomed to, and therefore wishes to preserve. The farmer and labourer are neither innovators, reactionaries, nor mys-

tics; and so one can well avoid controversy concerning dogmas by not dwelling on them, and heart-burnings about ritual by not changing it. My wise predecessor, who was a man of the world no less than a really humble ecclesiastic, bequeathed to me at least that portion of his wisdom. Accordingly, we have here no dangerous discussions as to the historical meaning of Anglican, Protestant, Puritan, High Church, Low Church, or Broad Church. Were one to indulge one's own personal preference, one might conceivably introduce services a little more frequent, and a little more ornamental; and in large towns, to avoid showing one's preferences can be no easy matter. I can hardly doubt that what are called by some persons Popish ceremonies, incense, flowers, lighted candles, much music, and the rest, sprang originally, in no small measure, like the mystery plays, from the necessity of gratifying the taste of urban denizens for spectacles and what is called diversion, if diversion deemed to be semi-devotional. Theatrical performances, Rousseau says shrewdly somewhere in *Émile*, are inevitable in large cities. Do we not see

something analogous in the modern demand that County Councils shall provide parks, open spaces, bands, free libraries, and so on, for the people? A rustic population, being more sparsely scattered, can exist without such distractions, at least where they have not been inoculated with, and made restless by, the town taste for unceasing excitement."

"It is very comforting," said the Poet, "to hear what you tell us; and I hope there are several country parishes one never hears of unless one lives in them, of which and of whose shepherd and his flock the same quiet story could be told. But, taking a wider survey, I think we have all to bear in mind that the Church of England can, no more than our Constitution, be stationary, but must accept the same influence of gradual, conservative evolution and adaptation to shifting circumstance. Like the Crown, its authority must in these days be indirect and somewhat indefinite rather than despotic or dogmatic, but not the less real on that account. The Episcopate must be, as on the whole surely it is, as tactful, as forbearing, and as much in harmony with prevailing

sentiment as is the House of Lords, and the Lower House of Convocation as representative of public opinion as the House of Commons. The lay element cannot be excluded from it, and it must aim at an indulgent comprehensiveness, and include in it as much of what is called Nonconformity as is willing to co-operate with it. Episcopal, let us hope, it must remain, and permanently allied with the State. But it must on no account aim at being sacerdotal; sacerdotalism having always been alien to the free and practical temper of England."

"I entirely concur," said the Rector, "with all you say." At this moment Lamia and Ursula rejoined us, and the sound of the wheels that were to bear us away were heard on the gravel. "In a word, the main object of the Church and Churchmen should be Peace, and their constant prayer be 'Give us peace in our time, O Lord!'"

"He has given it you here," said Veronica; "and we shall carry away a deep sense of it."

For a time we journeyed on in silence, till Veronica bade the driver halt, that we might gaze for a while on a view of valley and wood-

land of even exceptional beauty. Shortly, Lamia said, "Now at last I know what I should like to be."

"And that is?" I asked.

"The fair-faced, simple-hearted daughter of a rural Rector."

"There is no difficulty, Lamia," said the Poet, "in the fulfilment of that wish. I trust you are, in essence, that already; that, and something more. The permanent things, as distinguished from the passing, the real, as distinguished from the seeming, are widely distributed; and I will ask your leave to recite something on that theme which has been running in my head these last few days, and which I think I shall remember, because I have not yet committed it to paper.

THE THINGS THAT REMAIN

I

Glory and glitter of Thrones
Are flashings and fleetings vain,
That Time discards and disowns,
Shadowy, passing, inane.

Not the shows of the proud,
Not the loud-following crowd,
But sickness, sorrow, and shroud,
These are the things that remain.

II

Temples of marble and gold,
Porphyry, jasper, and pride,
Housing the Gods of old,
Have vanished, with yesterday's tide.
They have gone, with their glitter and glare,
They are mouldered and melted in air;
Weeping, and wailing, and prayer,
These are the things that abide.

III

Where are the citadels strong,
Where are the Palaces vast,
Where sycophants used to throng,
And pandar and wanton passed?
They have vanished with lure and lust,
They are sepulchres, ashes, and dust:
The homes of the humble and just,
These are the things that last.

IV

Statesmen, orators, hailed
As the Kings of their little day,
What have their plaudits availed,
Bronze forehead, and feet of clay?

Disease, and the knock that brings
Death to the door of Kings,
These, the enduring things,
The things that pass not away.

V

Obelisk, column, and dome,
Arches of War and of Peace, —
Where are the Soldiers of Rome,
Where are the Sages of Greece?
Fading and falling of leaf,
Seed-time, and mellowing sheaf,
Home, and the heart's own grief,
These are what never will cease.

VI

Gleaming and clashing of spears
Are barren as winter rain,
Burnish the scythe and shears,
Harvest the amber grain.
All that Fame chanteth and saith
Is vaunting and vanishing breath:
Love, and duty, and death,
These are the things that remain.

II

We were some two hundred miles from where Lamia had expressed her regret she had not come into the world the daughter of a rural Rector; and I suspect that, in the interval, she had seen more than one haunt of ancient peace in which her sensitive fancy could with contentment have imagined her lot to be cast. It is one of the advantages of our Island, that, though comparatively small and so easily traversed, it contains almost every variety of scenery that delights the eye and engages the heart. The country we were now passing through had nothing in common with that lately seen, except that it also was unmistakably part of England, and wore an air of long-established tranquillity. Hills of no mean elevation, though all of them tolerably easy of ascent, save to the feeble and the aged, rivers rightly designated such since they are never dry, if rarely over-brimming, and frankly open vales with music-making

streams wandering irresponsibly through them, define its character. Such marks as human beings have made on it are quiet Cathedral cities, small agricultural townships, prosperous-looking homesteads, and hamlets that seem to have long since reached their final stage of development, and to be well satisfied that their further evolution should be arrested. They are passed through rather than visited by the tourist in search of the obviously picturesque; but at all seasons they furnish a sufficient harvest for the quiet eye. For our mid-day halting-stage we had in view an Abbey, so extensive in its ruins, so noble in its architecture, and so admirable in its position, that it enjoys, it must be owned, if such should be called enjoyment, world-wide notoriety. But, though the holiday season was scarcely quite over, we counted on the comparative absence of visitors, since Veronica had foreseeingly arranged that we should be there at neither end of the week, but in the middle of one, when, even in these personally conducted excursion days, crowds desist from gathering, with their accompaniment of pardonable but painful merriment.

It naturally fell out that sometimes all four of the company travelled in company, whereas at others we separated into pairs; so that not unoften, though certainly never too often, it was my lot to entertain Lamia, which I fear I did but imperfectly, and Lamia's to entertain me, which she did to perfection, perhaps in some degree because, as she remarked, I am easily entertained. Our conversation generally began by a reference to the recent talk of my betters, which enabled Lamia, at least so she said, to liberate her mind more freely than, consistently with modesty, she could before superior persons like the Poet and Veronica. Her way of drawing the distinction was not so directly uncomplimentary to me as that; indeed she almost invariably left it ambiguous whether I was to regard the form of partiality she showed me as flattering or the reverse.

This morning, however, thanks perhaps to the spell still exercised over her by the Rectory garden and its occupants, and whom she seemed unable to forget, she treated me to serious thoughts, seriously expressed. "Is it," she said, "because we are moving about from place

to place, and, though leisurely and pleasantly withal, are travelling, that the thought struck me last night, Is the end of life the end of a journey, or only the beginning of another? If the latter, it is clear we ought to make preparations for it. Yet how can we do that, if we do not know, or know but vaguely, anything of the land to which we are bound? What, and whom, shall we find there? I feel sure Ursula asks no such questions, being too meek to do so, and is content to pass in and out of the old Church of which she told me she is to all intents the sacristan, by the Door of Humility. Do you remember the saying that the most complete persons are those who have about them something of the mellowness of October without having quite lost the freshness of April? Ursula seemed to me to answer to the description."

"And the Rector still more so, don't you think?" I said.

"Possibly; and is not the reason to be sought, in their case at least, in the simple sort of life they lead? Most persons in these days would speak of it as a small life. But no one

leads a small life that has a large heart; and it is comforting to observe that unlearned, and even little-travelled people who have large hearts seem to be on a friendly, familiar, and appreciative footing with the really large and variously gifted minds. How run the lines in a certain *Dialogue at Fiesole?* Is it not something like this?

> "Even in Autumn harvest you demand
> Returning hope and blossom of the Spring,
> All seasons and sensations, and at once,
> . . . . Do we blame?
> We envy rather the eternal youth
> We cannot share.

But the simple, humble, sensitive, large hearts of which we were speaking, do share this eternal youth."

Then silence fell on her thoughts, and, as she had said enough to set one pondering, I was silent likewise; and so we moved on taciturnly from dimpled green slope to dimpled slope, from discursive stream to discursive stream, from grove and meadow to meadow and grove. At length I wanted to hear her voice

again; so, lingeringly retrospective, as I suspected she also still was, I said:

"How consoling it was to hear the Rector, that quiet afternoon, describe the undogmatic character of his Sunday exhortations to his parishioners! Did you not think so?"

"You forget," said Lamia. "He spoke of that after Ursula and I had wandered away from you. But Veronica repeated to me the substance of what he said; and, had it not been that his daughter had been talking to me just as wisely, I should have much regretted to have missed it. I have thought since, perhaps mistakenly, that there is deeper danger to modern society than any audible clash of theological dogmas, perilous as these may be; for they can, with tact, be avoided, as the Rector said he himself avoids them, and, as you remember, Rousseau's Savoyard Vicar avoided them. Is not the real danger the antagonism that, in spite of appearances and formal ties, prevails between the modern State and the Church, the Church that tries so hard to be modern likewise, but is so ancient that the endeavour is far from being successful. Each has its Ideal, and the

Ideals are different. I must ask the Poet — and you will perhaps pardon the pupil for having, this morning, if so imperfectly," she added humbly, "repeated lessons inculcated by her chief instructor, — if I exaggerate the peril, in imagining this semi-divorce between Church and State must inflict grave injury on their common children."

"I imagine," I said, "he would answer that Man has both Ideals, and will continue to insist that both shall be more or less attained by continuous compromise."

"Possibly. Meanwhile let us be thankful the first Haunt of Ancient Peace we have visited has given us food for thought very different from the talk about persons and things insignificant, which too often now forms the staple of conversation in polite circles."

"Do you know what their income is? They live rent-free, it is true, but his stipend is less than two hundred a year."

"How I wish," said Lamia, "I could be allowed to stock Ursula's wardrobe! I would gladly give her all my frocks in exchange for her graceful figure and sanctuary manners."

Upon that subject I have my own opinion. But it was so tenderly thought, and so meekly expressed, that I said nothing.

Veronica and the Poet, who were a little way in front of us, had stopped, and now asked if we would join them.

"Only too pleased," said Lamia. "My companion has been so frivolous, and in such high spirits, that I began to fear we were going back to the garden that he loves. Please assure me, Veronica, that is not so."

"Not yet, dear Lamia. We wanted to point out to you that place on the wooded horizon to the left, not often equalled in its architecture, and I think nowhere surpassed in position."

"What a situation! What a noble air it wears! What trees! What a park! That is the historic England of the last four hundred years. May we not go and see it?"

"You see it best," said the Poet, in a tone that sounded rather regretful, "from here. I have stayed there more than once, for I knew its late occupant, a gentleman, a scholar, a statesman, a patriot. I almost think, when he was there, it was, despite its magnificence, a haunt

of ancient peace. But when he passed to the Perfect Peace of all, it became, if the strong phrase be permitted, a hell of modern revelry. Book-makers, women it would be a libel on Athens and Alcibiades to speak of as Aspasias, and music-hall buffoons, were then its chief visitors, and Bridge, with high stakes, its principal diversion. Its tenant is periodically summoned for driving his Motor Cars beyond the pace permitted by the law, and that is the least heinous of his offences. He is the son and successor of my friend. When that happens, one must be content to say '*Guarda, e passa.*'"

"Such a case is surely an exceptional one," I said; "though I have noticed that, since it furnishes searchers for what is called fashionable intelligence with many paragraphs, it is not infrequently taken as a text for a fresh homily on the decline and fall of the British Aristocracy."

"Yes, the easiest way of moralising. The other day I overheard some one expatiating on the inertness, the stupidity, the conservative crassness, the fatal self-complacency, of the English People, and I wondered to myself how

so incapable a race had acquired, and still retains, possession of half the globe."

"I suppose," said Veronica, "theorists always have a theory that accounts for everything."

"Just so," I said. "But is it not a curious circumstance that all the Laws of Human Evolution, and Philosophies of History, with which we have been furnished so profusely of recent years, while conclusively demonstrating to the theorist himself the course of the Past, fail to furnish us with any means of correctly surmising the march of the Future? It is as though Astronomers should offer us a Law that recorded infallibly the orbit of the planets for millions of bygone years, but did not afford us any trustworthy information as to where they will be found to-night."

"The pace," continued the Poet, "at which the son of my friend conducts his life, and which resembles that of his motor cars, was not long in killing, or at least in hopelessly maiming, the income that proceeded from a handsome estate; and that Home of England on which you gaze, like only too many others,

has for a time passed into the occupation of strangers, who in this case are, as one likes to think, of our own blood and race, though they come from the land that lies Westward over many hundred leagues of salt water. I have no doubt they live decorous and hospitable lives; but one cannot help regretting that the old stock does not remain in the old soil."

Lamia gave a deep and sympathetic sigh. But, perhaps because she had not been successful in repressing it, nor I in showing how it touched me, she promptly added:

"My forbears were not as intimately acquainted with the least attractive but most profitable of the domestic animals as I should wish them to have been; and therefore I am not of the rich material of which duchesses are occasionally made, and perhaps at my age I ought to cease contemplating the possibility of being inundated with even the more modest matrimonial gifts; silver inkstands, tortoise-shell paper-cutters, and capricious carriage-clocks. But I am not without my ambitions; and nothing less than a submarine telegraphic proposal, with 'Wire reply, answer paid,' ap-

pended, will satisfy me. My answer would, of course, be 'Certainly'; and though I should have to leave the Garden that I Love for a mansion in Twent-Cent Nineteen Hundredth Street, and a country house on — which Lake is it? I should at least have macadamised the way to a more brilliant avenue for my daughters, and enabled them to rescue old places from the tastes of new gentlemen. They, or their husbands for them, and if not, then their female descendants, should gain admittance to the ranks of the titled; for I need not say I should not allow them to marry poets, since, as I think I once observed, though the wives of peers are peeresses, and the daughters of millionaires are million-heiresses, neither the wives, nor the daughters, nor even the most admiring friends of poets, are poetesses."

"Are not titles," asked Veronica, accommodating herself with more than usual flexibility to Lamia's mood, yet speaking, I suspect, with a certain serious intention, "the distinction of people, otherwise undistinguished; save of course those who render direct service to the

State, or have inherited them from former holders who once did the same?"

"That is exactly what I think," said Lamia; "and as all my descendants, if I had any, would, I am sure, be as undistinguished as I am myself, that is why I anticipate for them artificial distinction."

"I cannot doubt, Lamia," said the Poet, "you can marry any one anywhere, when it is your good pleasure to do so. But, though one always regrets to see what are called old families unable, either through their own fault, or by the stress and strain of an emulously luxurious time, to continue to live in the old places, it always gives one pleasure to hear they are being rented by Americans, whose reverence for haunts of ancient peace brings them to the old country. We have much to learn from them, and I trust there is yet something for them to learn from us."

With each fresh winding in our progress, the scenery became more and more majestic in its beauty. Minor streams still abounded, and flashed and flickered in the mid-day sun, but, by degrees, their music grew less audible and

their course, without ceasing to be devious, less frolicsome and more limpid; and one broad unarrested river journeyed on through a spacious valley, from which dense woods retired up the hill-slopes, partly as though from a desire to look down more advantageously, and in part as if in reverence for something not yet within sight. A sudden sweep of the road, caused by the unalterable pathway of the river, a stone bridge with graceful arches and parapet of ancient masonry, and then the entire range of the ruins, rising from a sward of greenest smoothness, was before us. We gazed in sympathetic silence, born partly of wonder, but still more of reverence, before this noble heirloom bequeathed to us by the Past. One human figure, one only, could we descry; that evidently of a draughtsman, with labour concentrated on the motionless survival of days passed away.

"The altar had vanished, the rood-screen flown,
Foundation and buttress were ivy-grown;
The arches were shattered, the roof was gone,
The mullions were mouldering one by one;
Foxglove, and cow-grass, and waving weed
Grew over the scrolls where you once could read
Benedicite."

Thus recited Lamia, Veronica adding, "Yes, here indeed must Brother Benedict have returned when 'The bird had been singing a thousand years,' and

"He sate him down on a fretted stone,
Where rains had beaten and winds had blown
And opened his ritual-book, and read
The prayers that we read for our loved ones dead,
While nightfall crept on the twilight air,
And darkened the page of the final prayer,
Benedicite."

Passing under the Abbey gateway, we took our separate paths among the ruins, each of us influenced by the instinct that, though, if I may say so, four persons with feelings more attuned could not well be met with, a little preliminary speechless worship, previous to any joint hymn of praise, was due to the sanctity of the place, just as the solitary slow notes of some solemn organ introduce the outburst of full choral service that is to follow. But, even when, one by one, we came together again, our conversation resembled rather the simplicity of plain chant than anything more elaborate. When one is deeply moved, the

most unstudied words are those which rise the most naturally to the lips; though, should it not be added, and not forgotten, that the more imaginative minds endowed with a copious vocabulary have a simplicity of their own just as simple as that of the simplest persons, if a trifle more striking.

"A terrible child-bed hast thou had, my dear;
No light, no fire: the unfriendly elements
Forgot thee utterly; nor have I time
To give thee hallowed to thy grave, but straight
Must cast thee, scarcely coffined, in the ooze,
Where, for a monument upon thy bones,
And aye-remaining lamps, the belching whale
And humming water must o'erwhelm thy corpse,
Lying with simple shells."

That is Shakespeare's simplicity. Let us not forget this, I venture to say, lest the poverty of our imaginations and the paucity of our speech should lead us to be unjust to the gods of more majestic but equally simple utterance.

We had, accordingly, little to say to each other concerning what moved us so profoundly; nor did any of us strive to eke out the reserve

of our emotion by an untimely display of erudition, than which, on such occasions, nothing, I think, can be more out of place. In wandering amid a scene that tells its own tale and records its own history, it is better that each one should be guide and instructor to himself; and one felt that this dead but withal not dumb relic of the Past could preach the best and most consoling sermon on inevitable mortality.

Shortly, however, I noticed that Lamia was engaged in apparently friendly talk with the only human being visible in the Abbey enclosure beside ourselves. She has in a pre-eminent degree what the Marquis de Mirabeau said was one of the distinguishing marks of his scapegrace but celebrated son, *le terrible don de familiarité;* meaning by *terrible* not anything alarming, nor yet anything untactful and objectionable, but something very much the reverse. The words may perhaps be rendered into English, "the insinuating gift of readily going out of oneself, and of luring others into doing the same." It is this that would enable Lamia to speak to the proudest Monarch without being

presented, yet not make him feel she had taken an unwarrantable liberty, and to address the most shy, the most awkward, and the most reserved of British peasants, without causing them the faintest embarrassment.

"Who is your new acquaintance, Lamia?" asked Veronica, when Lamia joined us in what had manifestly been the refectory of the monks who had once prayed, studied, discoursed, written, illuminated, cultivated their cabbages, distributed alms to the needy, and caught and ate their fish, at this then unruined edifice.

"I am not quite sure, but I believe it to be ——," naming a painter much thought of by painters, and fairly well known to the world at large, but not one whose name perpetually meets the eye in print, together with the price fetched for his pictures. "I think I recognise him from portraits I have casually seen; but your observation is more retentive than mine, Veronica, and you would be able to say if I am right. In any case, he is a most agreeable talker. Shall I ask him to join us at luncheon, always supposing we are to have one?"

"Do so, by all means," said the Poet.

"There are no companions more congenial to one than artists who are willing talkers."

"And see, Lamia," added Veronica, "luncheon is ready, and awaiting us in that far corner of the roofless refectory."

Lamia was not long in returning, and bringing captive her new acquaintance.

"Yes," whispered Veronica, "it *is* he."

I need hardly say that the painter was warmly welcomed, and showed himself as much at home as one always is with those who know how to make one so.

"It does not matter in the least," he said, as we sate down, some on the turf, some on fragments of fallen masonry, "how poor, or how bad one's work may be, for, by one of the kindliest of dispensations, poor work, if loved for its own sake, is just as absorbing as the supremely excellent; and, though I believe there is somewhere where I was sitting the materials for a mid-day meal, which I fear would be no addition to your more tempting table, I had forgotten all about it; and since you are so hospitable" — addressing Veronica by her more ceremonial name,

which showed he knew who she was — "as to ask me to join you, conversation will add colour to this conventual repast."

"But you remember," said the Poet, "monkish brotherhoods never conversed at meals, but had to listen, as they ate, to one of their members who read from a vellum-bound volume on an oaken lectern the edifying history of some ascetic Saint."

"Quite so," said the new-comer, "and we equally should much like to be read to by a certain member of our own party, were it not that we feel we ought to show some consideration for his appetite, which, I have heard, poets share with more material persons."

"They are perfect ogres," said Lamia, "as far as I have had any experience of them. May I give you some of this pasty, which I assume is the designation for it suited to the place and occasion?"

I began to be a little afraid that Lamia's vein of levity, on which one comes at all sorts of moments and quite unexpectedly, and in which we all so readily indulge her, might hinder or mar more serious colloquy. But Veronica,

too, discovered the danger, and averted it by observing:

"One can understand, even if one cannot wholly approve, the motives that led to the invasion of the monasteries by the Civil Power in the reign of Henry the Eighth, to the expulsion of the monks, to the appropriation of their property, and to its division between the Crown and a new Aristocracy created to replace the old one which the Wars of the Roses had more than decimated. But was it necessary to reduce to ruins throughout the land such splendid buildings as the one in which we are sitting?"

"One can hardly believe," said the artist, "that, in many cases, it was done intentionally. Positive hatred of Beauty, which unfortunately accompanied the Puritan Movement, came later; and, though there may be no sacrilegious iconoclasm of which the more austere forms of conscientious theological conviction cannot be guilty, one suspects that the monastic edifices whose ruins still add charm to the winsomeness of our island, were unroofed, and so exposed to the winds, rains, mists, and frosts of our dilapidat-

ing climate, long before the days of Oliver Cromwell."

"Yes," said the Poet, "Kings and nobles who want money are not easily deterred from spoliation by a spirit of reverence; and what is true of English Monarchs and English nobles four hundred years ago and more, is equally true of Italian Popes and Roman nobles at a still earlier period. Thus Goth, Gaul, and Hun are popularly supposed to have done to the classical buildings of the Eternal City, as Puritan fanaticism is similarly supposed to have done to our Abbeys, what in reality was effected by other persons, animated by a quite different motive, the *auri sacra fames* of Horace, and *Plutone, il gran nemico* of Dante. They wanted money, or money's worth, and they seized it. Stone already quarried, and lead already fit for domestic use, came in most handy, as we say, for the country palaces of newly titled ambition."

"I can well understand," said Lamia, "that so much-married a Prince as the first Defender of our Faith was rather hard up sometimes. We poor simple vestals cost nobody anything; but

even one wife, I am told, can make very tight indeed the sacred bond of matrimony. It is easy, therefore, to surmise that a gentleman who generously saddled himself with a baker's half-dozen of them scarcely knew sometimes which way to turn for convincing tokens of his affection and his sovereignty. Probably we are lunching amid all that is left of what provided the price of Anne Boleyn's devotedness, or furnished the *trousseau* of Anne of Cleves. What dear things wives are! I wonder no one was earlier with the observation, *Cherchez la femme*, than a modern Frenchman. Perhaps there was. I am not intimately acquainted with the works of Martial, but I fancy he was not an unlikely Latin to have defrauded the nineteenth century of copyright in the idea. You, Veronica, can tell us, I am sure. For my part, I can only say that the man is a poor-spirited and most unchivalrous creature who would bewail the unroofing of a monastery, if it was done to provide poor ladies with pretty frocks."

I could see that Veronica, not unnaturally, thought this disquisition of Lamia's a little

long, and would have liked to curb it; but it was patent that the painter was delighted with her light accompaniment to our al fresco luncheon. Did she indulge in it in order to make yet one more captive? But, in truth, I never know why she does or says anything.

"Your survey of History, and your theory of the true cause that led to the destruction of English monasteries," said the painter, "is most suggestive, and constitutes, no doubt, the best apology that has ever been advanced for the conduct of Bluff King Hal and his ennobled sycophants. But perhaps an artist of a sort, though he be not an architect, may be forgiven for regretting that a sumptuary appetite, the necessity of feeding which one of course recognizes, should have led to the disappearance of so much that was beautiful, since I have often thought it still further fostered, if it did not engender, that insensibility to Art and to the Beauty which perforce underlies all Art which the English People, so distinguished in other respects, have since that period, and for so long a time, exhibited. What think you about that?" he added, turning pointedly to the Poet.

"I had not considered it," he answered. "But, as put by you, it strikes me as plausible. The destruction of the Monasteries, and the defacement and spoliation of the Cathedrals, gave to what may be called the New Asceticism, the Puritan Movement in England, additional encouragement and strength; and Puritanism, whatever may be its moral merits, is undoubtedly unbeautiful, not to say anti-beautiful, in its outward manifestations. Thus, save in a few country houses, we did not in this country get the advantage which was got elsewhere from the Classical Renaissance. Perhaps we are too serious, too ethical and controversial a people, to have done so. A Lorenzo de' Medici and a Leo the Tenth would here have found, not, as in Italy, a ready, but a recalcitrant and resisting soil for the long-buried seed their exploring emissaries brought from the East of Europe and sowed with such abundant results."

"Yet," said Lamia, "I remember, when we were in our Winter-Quarters in Florence, reflecting that Savonarola was rewarded for the Burning of the Vanities by being, shortly after-

wards, burnt himself. That was artistic justice with a vengeance. In England, on the contrary, the Merry Monarch, by his destructiveness, founded a polemical Protestantism, to which we are indebted for what, though an as yet unenfranchised female, I suppose I must call our political liberties, a passion for wrangling over dogma and ritual, and an utter ignorance how to put on our gowns."

"I think," said Veronica, "some of us know how to put on our gowns, to abstain from wrangling over ritual and dogma, and are quite as enfranchised as is good for us. But, standing here amid the ruins of a Roman Catholic Abbey, and still influenced perhaps by another pious haunt of ancient peace we recently visited, a rural rectory of the English Church, it strikes one to ask if the Papacy is likely to endure, we need not say for ever, for that is too unlimited a period for our limited powers of prophecy to deal with, but as long as what Lamia has called a polemical Protestantism."

"One sees no reason," answered our guest, "why that should not be. *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*, is the most untenable

of boasts. Nothing changes so much as the Papacy; but it changes slowly, cautiously, and circumspectly. It is a kaleidoscope, but not a kaleidoscope in the hands of a child. Its dogmas may seem not to have changed for hundreds of years; but the interpretation of them is being perpetually accommodated to suit every shifting mood of man and every winding current of thought; and even its ritual, which is so copious and apparently so fixed, takes new meaning from new conditions. Can one imagine any two things more unlike than the Papacy of the earlier Gregories, and the Papacy of the two Medici, of Roderigo Borgia, and of the Della Rovere patron of Raphael and Michelangelo; or than the Papacy of San Clemente, for example, and the Papacy of Saint Peter's? Saint Peter's is far from being one of the most beautiful, but is, I think, one of the most instructive buildings in the world. The dominant note of the Classical Renaissance was, I suspect, not Art, as is usually supposed, but Rationalism, or the re-enthronement of Reason, after a long period of sentiment and emotion; in other words, the admission of Hellenic Light

into the mystical gloaming of Gothic Architecture and the mediæval spirit. Hence Classical and Palladian Churches, with ample nave, spacious transepts, and abundant light, supplanted forest-like aisle and dim-lit sanctuary. This was the architectural expression of Rationalism. Rationalism led to scepticism; and Saint Peter's, with its vast, open, grandiose space, and clear white light, has helped more than any other sacred edifice to undermine religious feeling, and to second the doubts formulated by Reason. As one enters Saint Peter's, one feels no inclination to kneel and pray, as one does in Milan Cathedral, or as here, in this ruined Gothic Abbey, but rather to look round, to think, and to criticise."

"All that you have been saying," observed the Poet, "seems to me to be true. But, to answer Veronica's question, an institution whose earlier Churches were designed by the nameless but emulous architects of the Middle Ages, and later on by Brunelleschi and Michelangelo, that has had Frà Angelico, Masaccio, and Raphael as its painters, Dante and Ariosto as its poets, and Palestrina, Mozart, and Beetho-

ven as its musicians, to say nothing of a Thomas Aquinas and a Pascal for its expositors, has as good a chance of permanence as — I hope I wound no one present, or, indeed, absent, by the phrase, — anything human."

"Ought not some one," said Lamia, as we rose to our feet, "to say Grace after a meal in this Refectory?"

"Say it, then, Lamia," said Veronica.

Lamia bowed her head with deep reverence and at once obeyed, but in a tremulous voice:

"For these, and all His other mercies, above all for the crowning mercy of serious conversation, God's name be praised!"

Although we had already lingered long, we were not easily moved to leave a spot itself so retaining, and made yet more engaging by the accidental addition to our company; and he, moreover, seemed forgetful of his original reason for being there. Several times we rose and moved on; then we would rest again on broken column or jutting foundation, allowing question and reflection, arising from our surroundings, to pass from reflection to question again, with continuous discursiveness. When

Veronica, as willing a prisoner as the rest, but with her more practical temper, at length observed it was very sad, but we must go on our way, if we were to be as good as our word, and reach our promised bourne in anything like time that evening, the painter took courage to say what I could see he had awhile been meditating.

"Very sad indeed. But might I ask, as a favour, since we had no one to read to us at luncheon the life and legends of some Benedictine Saint, that I might hear a short recitation, at least, a little more modern?"

What he wished for was transparent enough; and Veronica, anxious to please him, gave the answer:

"I should like to have your opinion on a point we were discussing the other day, as to whether the English or the Italian form is, in our tongue at least, the better suited to the Sonnet."

"I will express it for what it is worth, if I may hear an example of each kind."

We all looked towards the Poet, who said:

"Then recite, Lamia, if you can remember

one, a Sonnet written in the more English form."

This Lamia did at once.

"When in the long-drawn avenues of Thought
I halt, and look before me and behind,
And seek what once I all too little sought,
Some spot secure of rest, I do not find.
Retrace my steps I dare not, lest each nook
I late rejected should reject me now,
And leafy arbours, restlessly forsook,
No more be prone their shelter to allow.
So to the untrod distance do I strain,
Which seemeth ever further to extend,
Desiring oft with irritable pain
Resolving death would bring that settled End,
When I shall know it all, or else forget
This far too little, which for more doth fret."

"That sounds almost like an Elizabethan Sonnet."

"I suppose so," said the Poet. "Yet it was written in what may be called our own time, though some years ago."

"And now for a Sonnet in Italian form."

Whereupon the poet himself recited:

"Alone we come into the world, alone,
Alone we leave it, and in vain we sigh

With breath unsatisfied, we pray, we cry,
For Something, not ourselves, to call our own.
Nor for more close communion maketh moan
The fireless hearth or homeless passer-by,
But adulated Monarchs pinnacled high,
And Genius exiled to its mountain throne.
Wherefore it is that, stumbling toward the goal
Of equitable death, we all implore
To be, at length, beyond life's misty shore,
Made one with God, the Infinite, the Whole,
And, by self's galling fetter bound no more,
Cast off this dreary solitude of Soul."

"As I listened," replied the artist, "the one seemed as natural, though not quite as native, so to speak, as the other. But I hope I shall be forgiven if I say that two sonnets do not quite satisfy my craving for a monastic recitation."

Thus pointedly appealed to, the Poet recited the following lines:

THE CLOISTERED HEART

I

In days more male and stern than these,
When strength struck swift to overawe
The bandit passions, and decrees
Writ by the sword had force of Law,

The uncontending souls that dream
Of heavenly peace, and strife appals,
Found refuge here by woodland stream
And sheltering hill, and reared these walls.

II

Here too the disenchanted heart,
And dupes of trusting love betrayed,
Sought sacred balsam for the smart,
Fasted and pondered, wept and prayed.
And, every noon around the gate,
The sick, the blind, the halt, the maimed,
Came with a tale as sad as Fate,
And found and clutched the help they claimed.

III

The gates are gone, and gone the dole,
The questioning cowl, the sandalled tread;
In choir no more, in alb and stole,
Are vespers sung, or matins said.
But, though nor line nor slab recalls
Where the ascetic brothers lie,
Lingers round vanished cells and stalls
The breath of claustral sanctity.

IV

But wiser, happier, holier they,
Who, undismayed, confront the strife,
Fly not, poor weaklings, from the fray,
But share, then staunch, the wounds of life;

Maintain, amid their madding kind,
Too human far to dwell apart,
The calm of a monastic mind,
The quiet of a cloistered heart.

* * * * * * *

It looked an ideal Village, ideal in its position, ideal in the architecture of its cottages, ideal in its blacksmith's forge, its baker's shop, its mixed grocery and hardware store, the simple but tastefully set forth window-fronts of its one drapery establishment, in its union of saddlery and fishing tackle under one roof, its domestic, sober-visaged, un-noisy, clean-painted, modestly curtained Inn, its leafy, retiring Vicarage, its Church, whose aspect seemed as contemplative as time-sanctioned, and its comely, substantial, Voluntary School, which, like the larger but still comparatively small houses and humble cottages, had its own garden of brilliant Autumn flowers. High above the Village, but not separated from it, was what is still denominated the Castle, though about it there was nothing of the feudal fortress, save a certain look of quiet determination to resist all that is worst in the Present, and to retain all that was best in

the Past. It bears the name of a local and perhaps legendary Saint, though many generations of holiness have fortified the claim that resides in its appellation. A long flight of well-worn brick steps led from the Village to a gate that evidently gave access to the house; but, swerving suddenly to the right, we ascended a steep hill on one side of which was one of the boundary walls of the Castle, at the summit turned leftward, and then, driving under a late sixteenth-century gateway, saw before us a house of the same date. At its main entrance was standing a figure in the very midsummer of womanhood, whom no one could possibly have taken for being of any race but our own, or as belonging to any class save that whose note is distinction of aspect and manner. At her side were three children, two boys and a girl, the eldest of whom might be eleven, and the youngest five or six. A moment more, and her words of welcome assured one that she possessed the further grace of a captivating voice. Her clear and distinct enunciation, in which every vowel was given its proper value, and every consonant its full sound, at once told the

sensitive ear that she was as familiar with the Italian tongue as with her own, and reminded me that, as I had previously heard, she had passed much of her early girlhood in the Eternal City, where her Father had served the State as Representative of the British Crown. There was something of the sweet south likewise in the unconscious languor that, when not animated by enthusiasm, humour, or exercise, seemed natural to her slender figure and gracefully poised head, which was crowned with an aureole of auburn-streaked hair. Looking on and listening to her, I could not help silently repeating to myself:

> Her presence was soft music. When she went
> She left behind a dreamy discontent
> As sad as silence when a song is spent.

Her children had the same refinement of manner as herself; exhibiting towards us all, even to Lamia notwithstanding the youthful freshness of her years, but more markedly to Veronica, the Poet, and myself, a deference of greeting and demeanour, that struck me as a fine example of the *bonos mores et decus omne*

Horace prayed the Gods to bestow on the youth of Rome. As we moved on through hall to gallery, our Hostess inquiring with genuine interest of Veronica and the Poet, both of whom were acquaintances of some years' standing, concerning our journey and where we had made our mid-day halt, one could not help observing that the sixteenth and twentieth centuries had been led to harmonise with each other in the friendliest manner. I hardly think I am a searcher for casual discords in places, people, or dwellings, for the most part beautiful and melodious, since I was long ago fraternally warned by the Poet against being such. But I doubt if the most assiduous fault-seeker could here have found material for censoriousness or untimely fastidiousness. To homes pervaded by charm, as to works of Art that approach perfection, the more happily constituted minds say "Yes," without any qualification. The proper homage due to them is absolute assent.

"I hope you will not mind," she said, "there being in the grounds to-day a number of people, our tenants and neighbours, and very quiet ones. They have been here all the afternoon, have

just finished tea, and will shortly be leaving. It is the annual gathering of the local branch of the Red-and-White Rose Society, which, because of a strictly non-party character, as no doubt you know, has done so much, don't you think? towards elevating the social and moral ideals, and softening the animosities, of the time. But, before they go, they will look for a few words of welcome; and, as my husband is on a Parliamentary Committee, and cannot be home till rather late, for which you must forgive him, my boy here, who, I hope, will some day make more important speeches in another place, has to act for his father, and for once play the grown-up man a little before his time."

I do not think I ever saw another so pretty or so English a scene as that of which we shortly were partakers. Passing into the terraced garden-front of the house, we found one of those gatherings of respectably, but unshowily dressed provincial people, deeply but quietly animated, enjoying themselves without noise but with much earnestness, having come there for that purpose, and likewise to do what

they thought they ought to do. Seeing our Hostess and her children once again, for these had passed most of the afternoon outside talking in turn with every one, they at once surmised that the hour for leaving was approaching; and so they clustered round the chief flight of terrace steps, from the top of which they knew, from long-repeated precedent, they would, in a few friendly words, be collectively addressed. The Mother stood at the side of this boy of eleven, with her hand placed affectionately on his shoulder; while, with a union of modesty and self-possession, he apologised for the absence of his Father, and then delivered in a clear, deliberate voice the brief words which he explained he had been told to say to them. A Bossuet or a Fénelon could not have been more attentively listened to; and it was not till he ended, and his little speech was enthusiastically cheered, that a slight blush came over his cheeks, and a tremor over his manner, and he seemed to turn and cling to his Mother, as though to ask what he ought to do next. But there was nothing more for him or anybody to do; for the gathering at once dispersed and dis-

appeared, after thanking his Mother, and saying how much they had enjoyed themselves; to which the response, in tactfully varied words was, "Come again, next year, or at any time. You know we are always delighted to see you."

Rather late that evening our Host arrived, having travelled fast and far to be in his home till his services were again required by the State. These were of no official character; he being too modest and un-self-seeking to be, as yet at least, despite the esteem in which he is universally held, offered participation in duties that are most honourable and eagerly coveted, and that will, no doubt, in due course fall to his lot. It is the self-imposed, unostentatious, but serviceable duties that are mostly his, and the best one can say of him is that he is a model citizen. He is lineally descended from one of the chief founders, in days gone by, a hundred and fifty years ago, of the British Empire. He is a pattern of courtesy to the whole world; but under his gentleness of manner lurks a strong character and beats with equable pulse a masculine decision. He and his seek for no popularity, either at Court, in Senate, Society, or

Market-place ; neither could be applied to them the epigrammatic gibe of Gibbon that offices which would have been disdained by the meanest of Roman freemen are eagerly coveted by some of the proudest nobles of Britain. They move with equal readiness among all classes where they can be of use, save that portion of what is more especially their own class who demean their Order by personal luxuriousness, vulgar display, or unceasing levity.

Not long after his arrival, the hour being late, we retired for the night, but not before paying a visit to the Chapel, where the domestics of the household were already gathered. After the reading of Evening Prayer, his wife played a Voluntary on the organ, and, at Lamia's request, and to the delight of us all, continued to play: nothing elaborate, only the simplest of semi-sacred airs, which brought back to one's mind the remark of a French writer, that, were the angels of Raphael to sing, they would sing the melodies of Mozart.

To such congenial society and so congenial a spot, whose quiet stateliness was combined with that inexplicable charm one rarely feels

in human habitations that have more than a certain modest size, none of us were eager to bid farewell; and it was made plain to us, beyond possibility of misgiving, that there existed an equal wish on the part of our kind entertainers that we should be in no hurry to depart.

Nothing can be thoroughly enjoyed that is gone through quickly and feverishly. Excitement, and what is called an intense sensation, may be caused by it; but it is not thus that the best, noblest, and more pleasurable pleasures are to be tasted. That is why some of us think that people in the present age, though so ardent in the pursuit of enjoyment, do not really enjoy themselves as much as men and women did who lived in days of more deliberateness, or indeed as the wise minority who, even now, move at a leisurely pace of their own. They see less, they feel less, they remember less. The mere cursory visiting of the Castle, its terraces, its fish-ponds, its garden, here formal, there wild, its old walls and borders that early Autumn befits so well, its orchard, its Church that was so near the Castle it seemed to form a local union with the State,

was enough for the greater part of one day; and, when one has seen what enchants one's gaze, and engages one's heart, one wants to see it all over again, to dwell with it awhile, and to carry it away in one's memory of memory. The weather continued to obey Lamia's original good pleasure, as when we started on our wanderings; and the Harvest Moon, now at full, prolonged the twilight, and retarded, while it glorified, the night. Lamia, who abandoned her more playful outbursts without abating her bright cheerfulness, was, I could see, much appreciated by our Host and Hostess, and likewise by their children, with whom she spent not a few of the passing hours. But she usually was with us when we sate of a forenoon under the walnut trees in what was called "Guinivere's Orchard," and always when at the top of the main terrace-steps, where the words of the young orator had been delivered, we had our coffee, and conversed in the moonlight. In the course of the morning some one read aloud sufficiently long to lead to spontaneous and undetermining talks, those wisest of all forms of conversation. One of these,

that arose naturally out of the volume Veronica happened to be reading, was the inquiry whether young girls are better, or worse, for the relaxation of restraint that has taken place in their education, discipline, and conduct. I noticed that, while our Hostess nearly always endeavoured, though with the most delicate tact, to entice the Poet into telling us what he thought on whatever subject was uppermost, he who, as I have heard Veronica say, is so slow to perceive his opinion is worth listening to, was equally anxious that our Host and Hostess should tell us what *they* thought. But, on the present occasion, he was prompt to remark: "I can only say, for my part, they are more attractive and agreeable than they dared to be in my youth. In that respect, as perhaps in others, some of us had the misfortune to be born too early."

"I suspect," said our Hostess, "you have had the happiness to enjoy both periods, and that, if a third were to supervene, you would enjoy that likewise, it being the special gift of certain fortunate people to appreciate all that is precious."

"I need scarcely tell you," interposed Lamia, "there is one of them that is not appreciated by Veronica and myself. We are only his valets, and therefore cannot do so."

"You are very ingenious, dear Lamia," said Veronica, "in your attempt to divert the conversation into another but much less interesting channel. Allow me to recall to you that we were talking of young women, and especially of the young women of to-day."

"Concerning whom," said our Host, "our guest made a very flattering observation, if it involved one a little humiliating to my wife, and his own."

"He was speaking, as I understood him," said Veronica, "of young women generally, with whom, though imperfectly informed by him on the subject, I suspect it may safely be surmised he has had a reasonably large acquaintance."

"Really, I must come to his rescue," said our Hostess, "for there seems a conspiracy, this morning, to make our discussions a little too rambling. Let us return to the theme of our young lambs, the maidens of to-day."

"If a lamb," said Lamia, "not so very, very young, may venture to offer an opinion, would it not turn out, after what our scientific investigators call a comprehensive survey, that a wider liberty has had much the same effect on young women that we are told it has produced on another inferior class of persons, the Black Races? It has developed some, and intoxicated others."

"A very just distinction," said our Hostess, with more gravity than had hitherto flavoured the subject. "If a girl be a true woman, and a woman of the nobler sort, no amount of liberty, I am disposed to think, can injure her. As Milton so finely says, 'Virtue,' employing the word in its widest and most generous sense,

> Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt.

But Society, more especially the Society of to-day, has two great pitfalls for women, whether young or not young. I am afraid that Pope, who wrote some very unjust things about women, was correct when he declared that we are subject, and too frequently succumb, to two sovereign passions —

> The love of pleasure, and the love of sway.

But Pleasure, in the sense in which he was using the word, can never satisfy any save very frivolous natures, woman's nature more particularly; and, though to dominate may wholly content the ambition of some men, domination, if obtained by women, makes them even less happy than I think they were intended to be."

The silence that for a moment ensued seemed to signify general assent. Veronica was the first to break it.

"I have rarely heard anything more true. Unfortunately there are a certain number of women, but I do not think they are peculiar to this age, women with what are called strong characters, who cannot help desiring to dominate."

"Doubtless that is so," said our Hostess; "and they are greatly to be pitied; for, whether they be allowed to dominate or are resisted in their desire to do so, they are equally dissatisfied. Just as there are men who are not quite men, and whom one regards as unmanly, so are there women not quite women, and whom one feels to be, to a certain extent and in a certain sense, unfeminine."

"Yes," said her husband; "but, in both

cases alike, they are few. To guard against this tare in our own little crop we have had printed, illuminated, and framed, as a birthday present for our girl when she is a little older, the concluding speech of Katharine in *The Taming of the Shrew*, and my wife has a number of copies, which she says she herself intends to give, apart from our joint wedding present, to the young ladies of our acquaintance on the eve of their marriage, to whom it is likely to be useful."

"May *I* have one?" said Lamia.

"Are you going to be married?" he asked. "I hope, in the general interest, it is at least not going to take place very soon."

"Alas! no," said Lamia. "Not to dwell on the circumstance that I have not yet been invited to do so, naturally I am reluctant to give up to a party what, as you observe, was meant for mankind. Still, I should be glad to possess a copy; for if, in the event of my ever overcoming that reluctance, I were tactfully to parade my approval of it, it might procure for me that invitation which may otherwise be withheld. After all, women, whether better or worse,

are still a necessary evil, if only because of the wiles I am told they employ to cheer men in their moments of discouragement and continual self-depreciation."

"An evil," observed our Host, "of which some of us are disposed to say, 'Evil, be thou my Good!'"

"And yet," said Lamia, "I am told we are not infrequently spoken of, in private male society, as a — ahem — nuisance! I wonder if we deserve the ill-natured things that have, during all time, been spoken and written of us by men?"

"I suppose," said the Poet, "some of it is deserved, but much of it is not. In one supreme respect, women certainly show their superiority to their maligners."

"How do they do that?" asked our Hostess.

"Men," he replied, "too often get, and forget. Women give, and forgive."

"Hark!" said our Host. "There is the luncheon-bell."

The children came rushing out of the house towards us, and Lamia ran forward to meet them.

"What think you," asked the Poet, "of Lamia?"

"She is dear," answered our Host.

"She is so nice," added Veronica, "that it will not be easy to find the man equally so."

"Being the true woman," subjoined the Poet, "that has been so admirably described for us this morning, she is sure to think him so."

"Yes," I observed, I hope not too prosaically, "as the widowed Florentine *donna di facenda* in our Winter-Quarters said one day to Veronica of her deceased husband, '*Fu un oracolo:* He was an oracle of wisdom.'"

"She at least was wise," said our Hostess, "unless her declaration of his infallibility was but a posthumous panegyric."

But the most delightful things end at last, and on the morrow we were to leave this dignified and still undesecrated Haunt of Ancient Peace. A certain foreshadowing of the sadness we should then feel seemed to be on us all, as we sate, for the last time, in the mellow Autumn moonlight. There were more pauses than usual

in our talk, more gravity perhaps in its tenor. Suddenly, Lamia exclaimed:

"Oh, if time would halt!"

Our Hostess echoed the exclamation: "If it only would!"

Then she turned to the Poet, and said:

"This longing so often recurs, and is so widely felt, that surely you have, at some time or another, given expression to it."

"I almost think I have, though very inadequately."

"I wonder if you would repeat it to us."

IF TIME WOULD HALT!

I

If Time would halt, if Time would halt,
When wintry tongues no more assault
The heart's lone citadel, and Spring
Hastens with Love upon its wing,
And, irresistible as fair,
Brings the long-sighed-for succour there;
When vernal smile and April song
Make palpitating breasts to long
For something beyond earthly bliss,
For world more fair than even this,

If bane in rapture lurk we care not,
And sorrow is as though it *were* not,
And only foresight makes default,
If Time would halt, if Time would halt!

II

If Time would halt when hawthorns blow
And Joy no longer loitereth slow,
But, hastening onward, joins the train
Led captive by June's flowery chain,
And woodbine nooks, and elder bowers,
And wildrose rambles, all are ours;
When freshly consecrated Love,
Like time-and-space-forgetting dove,
Hour after hour to one fixed bough
Clings, still repeating self-same vow
Till sunset's fading streaks decay,
And twilight seems more sweet than day,
And the moon moves through Heaven's clear vault
With soundless keel, — if Time would halt!

III

If Time would halt, when, though the days
Dwindle, yet nowise Love decays,
But, like ripe fruit in garden croft,
Grows yet more mellow, sweet, and soft,
From those actinic rays that bring
October peace to everything,

And we would rather, grown more wise,
See restful than resplendent eyes,
Feeling that Autumn's gaze serene,
When nought is left to reap or glean,
More touching is to look upon
Than wavering Spring and Summer gone,
And neither finds nor hints a fault, —
Then, even then, if Time would halt!

IV

Alas! Time never seems to halt,
Till sighs grow deep, and tears grow salt,
Till fails the light in living eyes,
And faltering words bring cold replies.
Then hours that used to fleet so fast,
Appear to flag and limp at last,
And, lone, we learn the day would come
When, ear grown deaf, and voice grown dumb,
We know not, in death's silent vault,
Whether Time hurry by, or halt.

Was it fancy that made me think I saw tears, like to falling stars, gleam an instant in the moonlight, then trickle and disappear down more cheeks than one? Perhaps the Poet likewise saw them, for his voice seemed suddenly to fail him.

"Oh, go on! go on!" said Veronica.

"Yes, yes!" said Lamia, "*you* must not halt there."

Thus besought, in trembling tones he continued:

But when nor wintry days, nor nights
Shorn of young dreams and old delights,
Nor hopes attained, nor dead desires,
Can quench the glow of household fires,
But Love's unfailing lamp burns on,
As in the sacred seasons gone,
And peace and prayer still keep divine
Love's uncontaminated shrine,
Heavenward at even pace we wend,
Nor ask that Time would halt, or end!

III

It was an Inn after the pattern of many such, whose exact date it is difficult to assign; with wrinkled, weather-darkened roof of red tiles, yellow-washed front, old-fashioned windows hung within with spotlessly white curtains, rustic porch with kindly, considerate seats on either hand, and over which clambered autumn-flowering honeysuckle and the second blooms of a Souvenir de Malmaison rose. It wore an air of tranquil but cordial hospitality, and peaceful cleanliness. Gazing on it, as you moored your boat to its informal landing-stage, you felt sure you would find a smiling face within its Bar, a doing, Martha-minded housewife in the parlour, a hearty, omniscient landlord somewhere in its precincts, and scrupulously clean bed-rooms with comfortable pillows, and muslin, lavender-lined bags in their chests of drawers. Your sitting-room, if you required one, which we did, would be of

like character; convenient, unassuming, made and furnished for daily wants and service, free from ostentation, with a wall-paper open perhaps to fastidious criticism, but neither affected nor offensive, and broken here and there by a plain-framed print either of sentimental or of sporting character. Its weak point would be its writing materials, since the bulk of its successive occupants for many generations looked on lengthened compositions as an incomprehensible waste of summer and autumn days. Its garden would be at the back, abounding in rows of marrowfat peas, runner beans, gooseberry bushes, with "Early Prolific," and late "Victoria" plum-trees, but not wanting withal in rosemary, and thyme, and maiden's-blush roses, with here and there a hollyhock and dahlia, and somewhere, be quite sure, a foliage-roofed arbour for the abetting and concealment of affectionate discourse. All these things a properly attuned mind would surmise, in the few paces of rising slope between landing-stage and entrance; and the anticipation would prove in every respect to be correct. I need scarcely say that three of our party, and, I humbly

hope, the fourth likewise, are rightly strung for such surmises; and, as we were led to the rooms Veronica had ordered in advance, the only comments we uttered were "Yes," "Just so," "Exactly as we expected," "Is it not homely and perfect?"

Veronica was sitting, as presiding divinity, at the tea-table, before an urn that steamed and bubbled, but which it may be owned she would not have cared to add to her well-known collection of that useful utensil, a nubbly silver teapot, of a design much revered by our grandmothers, but criticised somewhat profanely by their superfine grandchildren, and a profusion of tea-cakes, buttered toast, bread-and-butter, and Madeira cake, provided with a hearty disregard of the utmost limits of mortal appetite. The Poet was reclining in the easiest of easy-chairs, Lamia was seated at one of the open windows, and I, — well, it is of no consequence where I was. We were the only guests, for the moment, at The Sign of the Swan, for it was the middle of the week. The river flowed with calm continuous current past our gaze, making just enough music in its onward journey to encour-

age dozing or accompany quiet thinking. In the meadow beyond, a plentiful aftermath had that morning been cut, and already breathed the scent of half-made hay; from a rookery at its further boundary came the sound of much cawing, for in autumn the rooks seem to share the gregarious, holiday-making, talkative disposition of men and women; and, beyond again, was a bossy wood of beech-trees, here and there showing premonitory symptoms of the brilliant colouring with which Autumn tempers the pathos of their decay.

Shortly, Lamia rose from her seat at the open window, and, passing from the room, left it so much the poorer by withdrawing from it her presence. None of us made any observation, and perhaps I was the only one who noticed her going; for we have not, I am glad to say, that tactless habit, which seems inherent in many people, of participating overmuch in each other's movements. But I knew full well whither she was bent, and that she would not return for some time; for, in the course of the afternoon, she had confided to me, in the off-hand way she often has with me, the nature of her intentions.

"I am so glad," she had said, "we are going to pass the night where we shall; for, within an easy stroll of it, lives so-and-so," — naming a man of letters known to most people by name, not infrequently belittled, I am told, though I am but imperfectly informed on such matters, by writers of notices and casual paragraphs, for reasons best known to themselves, but, in any case, without result, for he is estimated quite differently, and with much generous appreciation, by disinterested and competent judges, — "and," continued Lamia, "I wish to make his acquaintance!"

"And how are you going to manage that?" I inquired. "I have always understood he is somewhat difficult of access. Have you provided yourself with a letter of introduction?"

"Now," she answered, "can you imagine me doing anything so useless? If I did, I should richly deserve to be told that he is not at home, and to have my walk for my pains. I am my own introducer. I shall go to his cottage, and, if he be at home, shall see him as a matter of course."

"Is not that rather a peculiar proceeding?" I asked.

"I wish you to understand," she answered, in a rather magnificent manner, assumed evidently for the occasion, and in order to put me in my proper place, "that I *am* peculiar, or at least that I am so, when I wish to be."

"But what," I ventured to observe, "will Veronica think?"

"You know perfectly well," was the reply, "I do not care in the least what anybody thinks, always excepting the Poet, and he is certain to think exactly what I think, being my nearest of kin, and from whom indeed I myself have learnt to what you call think."

"But what will Veronica say?" I urged.

"She would say many things, which would sound, and indeed be, perfectly true, if my praiseworthy efforts failed. But, as they will not fail, and she will know nothing of them till they have succeeded, she will say nothing."

I daresay it will have been observed that I never engage in a controversy, however trivial, with Lamia, but I get worsted; and I felt there was no more to be said on the subject. A little

later we sallied out to explore, — Veronica, the village street to see if by chance there was a stray urn or two, or some equally useless but no doubt interesting curio, to be picked up in a medley of old furniture, prints, books, clock-faces, and the rest, dignified with the appropriate name of a curiosity shop; the Poet, to exhibit, possibly to feel, an interest in whatever he was shown; and I, indifferent in which direction we went, since Lamia had gone in another. A casual inquiry was made as to where Lamia was; but, as none of us seemed to know, it was not pursued, and no astonishment was expressed, since none was felt, at her disappearance. But, just as we returned to the Inn, well content with our walk, since we had satisfied ourselves that the country around was worthy of the beautiful river that flowed through it, a rustic messenger, unmistakably a gardener of the old-world kind, rose from the bench by the side of the porch, and handed Veronica two notes, one, I could see, from Lamia, the other in a hand unknown to me. Veronica read them aloud; and, while the first only referred her to the second, the latter con-

tained a pressing invitation to supper, which the writer hoped would be accepted as a substitute for the more conventional meal of dinner, and adding that the writer had retained Lamia as a hostage for our compliance with the request.

"I suppose we must go," said Veronica, "if only to give countenance to Lamia's remarkable conduct."

"I trust," said the Poet, "we shall find, at the end of the evening, we have had a yet better justification for accepting, since I have frequently heard that her detainer is, on occasions, a genial and diverting talker."

"I must first change my hat, and get some cleaner gloves," said Veronica, "but will be with you directly."

"Remember, he is only a bachelor," I observed, trusting thereby to make Veronica's "change of hat and gloves" as brief as possible, but immediately repented of the observation, since it was calculated, if duly weighed, to bring into yet sharper relief the enormity of Lamia's behaviour. Happily, in the hurry of the moment, that inference was not drawn. We had already ordered dinner; but, when we

explained what had occurred, the Martha-minded landlady displayed all the virtues of Mary, said it did not matter in the least, and that she had provided nothing for us that would not serve equally well for luncheon on the morrow.

Preceded by the rustic gardener, we reached, in about a quarter of an hour, the foot of a noticeably steep hillside, bare for the most part save of here and there some yellow-flowering broom, casual patches of heather, and, at its summit, a line of larches and Scotch pines. A little way up a sandy path, there seemed to be a cottage and garden; but the first was so curtained by the trees and shrubs of the second, that its existence could as yet rather be surmised than seen. Our guide, stopping at a wicket gate, opened it for us to pass through, and, after a few paces, we observed a straight garden avenue lined with white phloxes and bright pink hollyhocks, both in full bloom, and towards the further end, with their backs to us, Lamia, with her usual erect but pliant carriage, and a male figure, whose slightly bending back suggested the sunset side of life. They were

evidently deep in talk interesting to both. Reaching the extreme end of the hollyhock path, they turned, and at once perceived us; and, with brisk step and outstretched hand, the host, who was no stranger to us by name, and who had written the note of cordial invitation to Veronica, hastened toward us.

"How good of you to come!" he said. "But this dear young lady" — Lamia was still walking leisurely at some distance behind him, smelling an autumn rose that had evidently just been given her, and looking on at the exchanged greetings with a half-amused, half-complacent smile, — "this dear young lady, with whom I am already on a footing of friendliness, assured me I might take with you what persons of narrower understanding would perhaps have regarded as a liberty and a grave offence against social observances. It is a great, very great pleasure to see you, and" — grasping the Poet warmly by the hand — "I have long wished we could meet, though I did not see how it was to be brought about save by some happy accident. Had I known of the existence of this tactful ambassadress, I should not have

been deprived so long of the attainment of my desire."

Greeting more calculated to justify Lamia, and to disarm Veronica, could not well have been conceived, and it made us all alike feel at home forthwith in this haunt of ancient peace. Accordingly we strolled about the garden as we would; and, as the attention of our host was now mainly turned to Veronica and the Poet, I enjoyed the privilege of slowly traversing it in the society of Lamia.

"Do you not perceive," she said, "that all the impression and effect one wants from a garden is here produced without visible effort or intention, and that the garden's own sweet will has been taken into consideration and respect? It seems, and therefore is, I suppose, original without striving to be so. It is quite finished enough to satisfy the healthily fastidious sense, it wears a certain air of unsolicitous negligence without something of which, though some persons seem to be unaware of the fact, there can be no simplicity, and no sincerity. Into a garden that we both know, but that shall be nameless, the demon of tidiness has

perhaps entered overmuch, and if 'the grand old gardener and his wife' do not have a care, they will in time be expelled from what may still be paradise. Look at this grassy path, flanked on either side by its border of pinks whose blooms have passed away, but whose silvery foliage remains, of white phloxes, pink hollyhocks, lingering autumn tea-roses, and slope of apple-trees hung with luscious-looking fruit, and seeming as though they still blushed for the far-off parental fault that brought 'death into the world and all our woe.' The Tiger and Golden lilies are everywhere, but everywhere in unexpected places, withal the right place. Mignonette is the prevailing fragrance here, heliotrope the dominant perfume there; and now we are walking to windward of a miniature forest of the sweet-smelling tobacco plant, though I cannot see it. And don't you smell the night-stock? I always fancy Shelley's 'champak odours' were from the night-stock, though I have no doubt the first learned person could show triumphantly I am quite wrong. What a world of renewed youthfulness there must be, in Spring, in that shrubbery of lilac, laburnum, Japanese cherry,

and standard hawthorn! Our host is a bachelor, is he not? I almost think I should like to be his wife."

"Why," I said, "he is more than twice your age!"

"Is he really?" she replied. "I should have thought he was only half my age, if I had thought about it at all. Some men always seem half the age of everybody else. Moreover, I like old people. At least, I dislike young ones, unless they be very, very young. The young people, especially the so-called young people of to-day, are intolerable, especially the young unmarried women."

"But," I observed, "you yourself are a young unmarried woman."

Quick came the answer: "Oh, but we all find ourselves bearable, perhaps because we are the person we know least about."

"How did you gain admittance?"

"By leaning over the little gate through which, I suppose, you likewise entered; until the gardener, observing me, asked somewhat curtly if I wanted anything. I asked if our host, as you call him, was at home. The gar-

dener said he was, and inquired if I wanted anything with him, which perhaps is not correct English, but is understanded of the people."

"And what did you say?"

"I hesitated, and then answered, 'Nothing in particular; and please do not disturb him on my account.' He walked away, and I remained leaning over the gate. Presently our host came walking in its direction. I suppose you are aware that I know a certain sort of person when I see one, and that, when I speak to him, he at once exclaims, in your loved Virgilian language, *O Dea certe?*"

"And what," I inquired, "may a certain sort of person be?"

"A person of the right sort is one who has a solid grasp and realistic apprehension of people and things as they are, an irresistible inclination to transfigure them according to his imagination, and an inexhaustible supply of philosophic humour. That being so, if you cannot imagine what followed, and are not aware that one and one are not always two, but sometimes still one only, you are duller than I think you."

At this moment a bell rang throughout the little garden, admonitory of a meal, and we all met at the foot of a flight of stone steps in whose cracks and crannies yellow stonecrop was thriving, and over whose timber porch vine, honeysuckle, and passion-flower were tangled and intertwined. The architecture of the cottage was English, nothing more, simple but not unbeautiful; and, within, prevailed the scent of the garden. In what I suppose I must call by the conventional name of the drawing-room, as equally in the Hall, I noted that the furniture was all home-produced in the good old times; but the casts of bust, torso, or statue, and equally the engravings, were of a yet older period, the very heyday of Grecian art; the Parthenon, the Hermes from Olympia, the Berlin Adorante, the Narciso, the bust of Homer, the Bacchus with Cupid on his shoulder, that are in the Museum at Naples, the Meleager in the Vatican, the Venus of Melos in the Louvre, being conspicuous among them; just as in the dining-room I observed that only the reproductions of the best Italian painters were recalled to one's memory. Veronica told

me that elsewhere were excellent prints of the Rome of the eighteenth century, from the original plates of the elder Piranesi before they were looted and carried off to Rome by the great Corsican pilferer, and there lamentably doctored, being, after his very proper confinement in Saint Helena, taken back to the Eternal City. The same stamp of best, and best only, was to be observed in the books that were lying about. Our Host had himself very recently published one; but no copy of it was visible, nor any paper nor review referring to it.

"I think," said our Host, as we sate down to supper, "that we may consider grace has been provided for, and will preside over, our meal, by two at least of the company who have honoured me by their society this evening; and, while I make no manner of apology for its Spartan character, I wish to commend to your benevolent notice, since I neither produced nor purchased it, but received it as a gift, some wine superior to any Horace ever drank, or that Redi has extolled, since it was grown and bottled in the Heaven-favoured land and by the painstaking, perfection-craving people of France,

and that may, I hope, inspire in one whom I most cordially welcome here, a blood-warming lyric whose body will be as full and whose flavour as refined as the wine itself, and whose rhymes may ring as roundly" — and here he suited the action to the word — "as the drawing of this — yes! — perfectly sound cork."

He came to each of us in turn, and filled our glasses with the bright, clear, aromatic wine. When that important but simple duty was performed, the Poet raised his glass and said:

"To the giver of the Feast!"

"That is an honour," said our Host, "that I think ought to be divided between the ostensible giver and this gracious child of nature who is sitting on my left. It is to her, not to me, we are all indebted for a meeting like this, that doth indeed make amends for many a more formal one which I have no doubt we have all had to endure in our time. Hospitality should be accidental, spontaneous, and impulsive, not pre-arranged and calculated."

"So think all of us, I am sure," said Veronica. "You have drawn the just distinction between

the pleasures of the table and its pomps. The second kill the first."

"And the guests as well," said Lamia; "and make them meanwhile drag on a miserable existence. Is it not the same with what is now called 'entertaining,' in country houses, to which people are invited for weeks beforehand, and where not only the day in which you are expected to arrive and to depart is named with Procrustean exactness, but the very hour and train are indicated with equal precision? What can be the cause of such enjoyment-baffling fatuity?"

"The disappearance of friendship," said our Host. "Most people in these days are too busy, too much in a hurry, and too inflamed with social ambition, to be friendly. Their business is, for the most part, unprofitable, their hurry is gratuitous, and their ambition is both trivial and futile. Everybody seems to know everybody, and nobody to care for anybody, save as a convenient card for playing successfully the game of 'Entertaining.'"

"Just so," said Lamia; "I have been asked to scores of Country Houses for just thirty-

eight hours to the stroke, for no better reason that I could see than the one for which notoriously good shots are invited to a battue; except that, in my case, I was invited to occupy, not a hot corner but a lukewarm one."

"There will always be a warm one for you here, and" — turning to Veronica — "if I may make bold to say so, for you equally."

And this was the man whom one had often heard described as churlishly, or superciliously, secluded, and self-centred!

"But how," asked Veronica, after an acknowledgment of the fervent words as gracious as themselves, "is a cure to be found for a disease which Lamia has described as a mortal one?"

"Is it not," he answered, "to be looked for in the very deadliness of the disease?"

"Conceivably," observed the Poet. "Ingenious optimists, I daresay you have noticed, have recently propounded the theory that there is no trustworthy remedy for excessive drinking except letting people drink. They must drink themselves out of drunkenness, by sheer incapacity for further drinking. May it prove the same with organised entertaining! When

it does, spontaneous, unexpected, and delightful hospitality like this will be, not the exception, but the rule."

It was a summer night, windless and full of fragrance, without any hint that chill October, though not very far-off, was waiting to cause the less young members of a company to say, "I think I will go indoors." Our Host led the way up the garden till we reached a summer-house furnished as a "study," in which he evidently wrote when the humour took him. Lights there were within, though its doors stood wide open; but there were wicker chairs outside it, and there it was we preferred to sit. The conversation, like our meeting, being, if I may call it so, accidental, ranged over several subjects, and it was only natural, perhaps, that some of it should concern itself with authors and authorship; and, as I was a listener throughout, I will set down a portion of it, in the hope that it may have some interest for others, as at the time it had for me.

"I should think," said our Host, when it happened to touch on the mistaken estimate so often formed of writers of imagination by their

contemporaries, "that all of us here know what an erroneous notion it is that only one opinion, and that favourable, was always entertained concerning works now admittedly of the highest order. In Virgil's lifetime, a work by one Asconius Pedianus was published entitled *Contra Obtrectatores Virgilii*, Anglicè, if it be necessary to translate it, *A Defence of Virgil against his Detractors*. In the Middle Ages he was revered, not so much as a great poet, but as a compound of the semi-Christian saint, prophet, and wizard; and it required a Dante to hail him as *Il savio, mio maestro*, and *degli altri poeti onore e lume*. Later on, a German writer described him as 'unreadable, or at least not read.' One critic speaks of him as 'frigid and shallow'; another opines that, if you were to take away his diction and metre, nothing would be left; a third clubs together the *Æneid*, the *Henriade*, and the *Messiah*, and deems all three equally deserving of critical contempt; while a fourth, referring to the legend that Virgil himself was tempted to burn his great poem on account of its imperfections, regrets that he did not yield to the temptation. In the year

1396, eighty years after Dante died, the Public Authorities of Florence decreed that five monuments should be erected in *Santa Maria del Fiore* to the most famous Florentine writers. Among the five was one gentleman called *Accursio*, about whom I can tell you, and I suspect you could tell me, nothing, and another bearing the name of Zanobi da Strada. Dante, it is true, was one, but not the first named, of the five; but I think we may doubt if he would have esteemed it an honour to be made *della loro schiera*, one of such a band as that, as he did when Virgil made him *sesto tra cotanto senno*, or sixth, in the sage company of Homer, Horace, Ovid, Lucan, and himself. Can *you* help us," he said, turning to Lamia, "with more illustrations of the truth on which I have expatiated, I fear, rather longsomely? for I feel sure you have a good and a ready memory."

"My contributions to the subject," she answered, "can be but few and feeble, after your more recondite ones. But I seem to remember, and Veronica will help me when I am at fault, for we not long ago explored the subject together, that some one who has been forgotten

for many a generation wrote of the author of *Julius Cæsar* that he had his head full of violent and unnatural images, and that history alone furnished him with fine-sounding names; while a more distinguished and less forgotten personage, declared the soliloquy 'To be or not to be,' in *Hamlet*, a heap of absurdities. Everybody knows how a celebrated critic pronounced *Hamlet* throughout to be the work of a drunken savage. Of *Paradise Lost* a contemporary of Milton wrote that a blind old schoolmaster had written an epic poem on the Fall of Man, the only remarkable thing about which was its length."

"Such reminiscences," said the Poet, "if not dwelt on overmuch, so as to foster self-consciousness, may perhaps be consoling to writers who think, rightly or wrongly, that they are treated with some unfairness by their contemporaries. But, due allowance having been made for that, do you not think that authors are themselves, through excessive sensitiveness, frequently unjust to those whom they consider wanting in just appreciation of their works? As a rule, these write in haste,

and with a certain bias, almost inevitable in human nature. The author, for instance, they decry is, say, a man who holds what the critic regards as pestilent political opinions, who at some time or another may possibly have struck hard for these, and which for the time being have now gained the ascendant. He may have been educated at the wrong University, or even not be a University man at all; while the critic is, or fancies himself to be, a distinguished alumnus of some famous Alma Mater, of whose claim to a monopoly of enjoying or bestowing distinction he is filially jealous. The writer under review may be of a wrong way of thinking in theology, which has always been regarded as an intolerable provocation to a right-minded critic; or other people, equally objectionable from one or other of these points of view, may consider and habitually treat him as an author of much power and imagination; and that is too exasperating not to be resented. Finally, or at least to end these, I fear, tedious surmises, he may have written works nearly as long as *Paradise Lost*, which this entertaining young lady has informed us a contemporary critic

affirmed to have nothing remarkable about it except its length, he no doubt not having read it; and, in these days, it has been discovered that life is too short to read any poetry except brief lyrics. I almost think, Lamia, you might at some time or another complete your interesting investigations by making, on the other hand, a collection, after industrious search in files of forgotten publications, of the enthusiastic reception accorded to works, week after week once declared to be immortal, that are already dead."

"I have already," said Lamia, "made a tolerably bulky collection of ephemeral panegyrics upon poetry affirmed to be permanent, or, in the lofty critical language of our day, come to stay, that are already portions of the buried past. Indeed I have written a work, I need hardly add, a great work, on the subject, and am already making due provision for its being judged fairly, by arranging to have most of the notices of it written by my friends. Everybody present will receive an advance copy, so that you may all have ample time in which to prepare your spontaneous ad-

miration. Lest any one should consider such a course open to adverse comment, I may remind you that a writer who, though now in his grave, may accurately be described as of our own time, wrote in the following words to a critic and a friend: 'I am anxious that some influential article or articles by the well-affected should appear at once when my book comes out. So-and-so wishes to do it in the so-and-so, and so-and-so elsewhere; and if these, and yours, with perhaps another or so, could appear *at once*,' — I forget the *ipsissima verba* of the rest of the sentence, but, with your great intelligence, you can easily surmise its purport. But I do recollect that the same wise and far-seeing author wrote to a female confidante, — it was not I, for I must have been teething at the time, — 'I shall certainly get the book out by the end of April, as three or four kindly hands are already at work on it for the May periodicals.' So, you see, I have ample warrant for the course I propose to pursue, and into which I cannot doubt you will all enter with becoming spirit. To show you the absolute confidence I have in your friendliness and dis-

cretion, I will add that I intend to write the adverse notices of the work myself, so as to take care they shall not be too offensive, except to the writers of the favourable notices, who, I am sure, will not mind being held up by me to public ridicule for so praiseworthy an object. And if my particular log does not roll after all that pushing, their labour is in vain that make it, which in the long run it no doubt will be. But meanwhile I shall be one of the Women of the Time, indeed, — who knows? — *the* Woman of the Time!"

"You will richly deserve the particular reward that awaits you," said our Host, entering with sympathetic zest into Lamia's humour. "But as your irony, dear young lady, is sometimes so fine that it is not always possible to be certain whether in your quotations you are giving us the precise text of what occurred or only a playful verisimilitude of it, please tell us if you were trusting to your memory or your invention for the passages in the letters from which you have just cited."

"From my memory, I can assure you; for I copied them out not very long ago. They

are the precise words used by a writer of real literary distinction; and his correspondents are almost as well known as himself."

"Is it possible!" he seriously exclaimed; and then, altering his tone to suit the occasion, "but since it is not only possible, but actually occurred, you have, as you say, copious precedent for the course you propose to pursue for the welfare of your great work, and to the instantaneous recognition of whose merits we shall all, I am sure, gladly minister in the manner you have described. I shall look for the advance copy you promise me, with an eager interest."

"And I," said the Poet, "who am your humble and obedient servant, shall do the same."

"But," said Lamia, "I have not yet exhausted the praiseworthy methods I propose to pursue in the interests of the Higher Literature. No truly wise and patriotic person, I am told, holds aloof from what is called the General Movement, and this is the Age of Trusts; and I intend to establish two more: one, the Depreciating Trust, the other the Critical Combine,

in which every unappreciated or insufficiently appreciated writer, and every more or less disappointed author, will, I am assured, take a share. I have already engaged some well-known experts; and though our operations will not be altogether novel, they will be more extensive and more united than any yet attempted."

I had noticed that, during this seemingly frivolous persiflage, Veronica had exhibited some signs of impatience, and she now broke in with what was evidently an irresistible impulse.

"I am sure our kind Host will pardon me if I say that you have all displayed a lamentable lack of moral sense. For my part, I can neither condone, nor treat lightly, unworthy and, most of all, unjust and malignant conduct; and it is most unjust and base for any one to depreciate either a writer or a book, for any of the reasons that have been pleaded as not only an explanation but a palliation of, and almost as an excuse for, the offence."

"But, my dear Veronica," said the Poet, "to whom is it unjust? Possibly to the person

who perpetrates the offence; certainly not to the writer against whom it is directed. A man's reputation, if he deserves one, is invariably made for him by his enemies."

"I am entirely of that opinion," said our Host. "He is decried into consideration, and belittled into fame. So it ever was, so it ever will be."

"There!" exclaimed Lamia, triumphantly. "My conduct is justified in advance. I shall owe nothing to any of you, eulogise me as industriously as you may. I shall owe my reputation wholly to myself, my own best enemy."

"If I may," said our Host, "for a moment treat seriously the subject our young companion has enlivened with her amiable satire, I cannot help thinking, with our friend here, that authors are somewhat to blame, and much to be pitied, for the unnecessary sensitiveness they show to malevolent, and even to honestly adverse, comment. The day after Petrarch was crowned with the laurel wreath, he was attacked by ruffians under the very walls of Rome. But one never heard he was any the worse for it.

Yet, incredible as it seems, Petrarch, who enjoyed the esteem of all estimable men and the reverence of all reverent minds, actually wrote to Boccaccio in the following words: 'The laurel brought me no increase of learning or literary power, as you may well imagine, while it destroyed my peace by the infinite jealousy it aroused. From that time, well nigh every one sharpened his tongue against me. It was necessary to be constantly on the alert, with banners flying, to be ready to repel an attack, now on the left, now on the right, for jealousy had made enemies even of my friends. In a word, the laurel made me known, only to be tormented. Without it, I should have led the best of lives, a life of obscurity and peace.'"

"I echo the words," said the Poet, "you used a little while ago, 'Is it possible!' Possible that Petrarch, of all persons, should have written or felt like that; Petrarch who, as you know, ends his very first sonnet with the exclamation:

Quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno!

But if authors want a really worthy example, they will find one in Walter Scott, the noblest,

the manliest, the most lovable man of letters, with whose life I am acquainted. I fear Veronica would tell you that I have of late been somewhat tiresomely insistent on that theme; for last winter I made myself more intimately acquainted with Lockhart's *Life* of his father-in-law, and I cannot describe how deep is the impression it has left on me. It inspired me with a loving worship of Scott's character, and made me retrospectively long to have been one of his household, and to have waited on him, his coming and his going, his labours, his sufferings, his patience, with the fidelity of the dogs to whom he was so touchingly attached."

"You are not aware, dear Poet," said Lamia, "how exasperating you are; and this evening you have some one almost equally so to keep you company. Were I really a professional literary critic, I should feel concerning both what I once heard said of one of you, that you are the most annoying of men."

"But why?" asked our Host.

"You are the most annoying of men," answered Lamia, "because it is impossible to annoy you."

"You put the matter epigrammatically, and therefore amusingly," said our Host; "an excellent way, sometimes, of conveying what one seriously thinks. But, in truth, what is there to be annoyed at? Even the most cursory and imperfect survey of contemporaneous judgments on writers and their works in the past, such as we have had this evening, serves to show how fallacious and misleading they are. Indeed, the history of Literary Criticism is an almost undeviating record of discredited judgments, futile ill-nature, and falsified predictions. Is there any reason to suppose that the present age is any more infallible than its predecessors? I should be disposed to suggest that it is yet more likely to prove fallible than even they were, because of its yet greater confidence in its infallibility. Is it arrogant to ask how is it possible for any serious person to allow himself to be overawed by the opinion of the present Age for instance, that, for several years, believed a greatly gifted and splendidly energetic man of action, with an imperious but mercurial mind, a sonorous voice, a commanding manner, and a copious but somewhat redundant vocabulary, but

no continuity of judgment, no true insight, to say nothing of foresight, and a curiously perverse sense of patriotism, to be not only a Great Statesman, but one of the greatest that ever lived, and considered any one incorrigibly stupid or bigoted who thought otherwise? Yet even already, people have begun to waver in, if not to abandon, that opinion. Is it unreasonable to suspect that the current literary judgments of the time will prove as delusive as its political ones? One must remember, moreover, that many of the loudest and most persistent leaders of literary opinion are themselves men who have been on the scene for a considerable time, and therefore continue, partly from an intelligible and pardonable self-love, to repeat and insist on views that, with minds younger or more accessible to sounder and more correct estimates, are already becoming obsolete."

"You are very courageous," said the Poet, "to enforce the view you have been expressing with such an illustration as you have just selected."

"But do you think I am wrong?"

"I could not honestly say that I do."

"So I imagined, for I have heard that, at the time of the final disappearance from the House of Commons of the Great Figure I have alluded to, you wrote some lines that were not published, since I suppose you thought the moment inopportune for their appearance."

"Yes, that is so," was the reply. "Yet the lines were, I trust, most respectful, for it seems to me it is very unbecoming in any one to write otherwise of a man who is held in great reverence and estimation by numbers of his countrymen."

"But might we not hear them to-night, in this, I fancy, tolerably harmonious company?"

"I could not, at a moment's notice, recall them with anything like accuracy, they were written so many years ago."

"But *I* can," said Veronica; "I so heartily concurred with them, I learned them by heart."

"Please do, then."

Whereupon Veronica recited, much better than the writer of them would have done, the following stanzas:—

A VANISHED VOICE

I

Is He then gone? And will no more
That Voice sonorous swell and soar
Where it so oft hath rung?
Never again will here be heard
The magic of his glowing word,
The glamour of his tongue?

II

Yes, husht and vanished now for aye
The thunderous ire, the lightning play,
That shook or lit these walls;
And, where thronged friend and foe to hear
The ringing of his clarion clear,
A farewell silence falls.

III

For well-nigh more than twice the span
Of days assigned by Fate to man
For virile speech and sway,
He made this sounding stage his own,
And charmed with wizard talk and tone
A Senate's sense away.

IV

E'en thus of old, in Athens fair,
The Attic Tyrant, well aware
How eloquence still charms,

Lured her unwitting freemen near,
Eager to see and keen to hear,
Then reft them of their arms.

V

The slave of speech, but lord as well
He wielded it with such a spell,
That myriads, pressing round
The musical enchanter, caught
Contagion from the fervid thought,
Conviction from the sound.

VI

Dupe of each ill-digested dream
That makes spontaneous impulse seem
A message from the skies,
His judgment flamed with every gust,
Too rashly generous to be just,
Too wayward to be wise.

VII

The cheap-earned plaudits of the crowd,
Reward of Rulers not too proud
To pass to it the Rod,
Bewrayed him so in fading years,
He fancied its fantastic cheers,
The mandate of a God.

VIII

For these he left the wise, the good,
For these the loyal brotherhood
That long around his name
With generous ardour flocked and fought,
Unto his need their noblesse brought,
And carried him to Fame.

IX

Doubtless he deemed — for unto him,
Thus frenzied, Passion's latest whim
Appeared a sacred creed, —
That the wise Past, so tried, so taught
By stern experience, only fought
For privilege and greed.

X

Thus he who thought himself the friend
Of each wide aim, each virtuous end,
A narrow Flag unfurled,
Striving to pen, in puny fields,
The race whose wave-wide Sceptre shields
The welfare of the world.

XI

Oh ! how unlike to Him who sleeps
Where Hughenden's green woodland keeps
Watch o'er a Statesman's grave ;

Who trod his base-born self-love down,
And lived to learn the loftiest Crown
Is to be England's slave.

XII

Who waxed, as well beseems the sage,
Still more magnanimous with age
Unto his latest breath;
Smiled at the fickle shafts of Fate,
In adverse fortune doubly great,
And dignified in death.

XIII

Hence with our Isle's majestic name
Will His be linked as long as Fame
Smiles round its foam-fenced shore;
While he, whose farewell word was strife,
Will sound, in story as in life,
A Voice, and nothing more.

When we rose to take farewell, our Host said he would walk part of the way with us to the little Inn. It still remained a fragrant windless night, and its warmth seemed to come up to us from the very road we were traversing.

"To revert, if for a moment I may," he said, "to the sensitiveness of too many authors to criticism, if a writer does happen to think

his works imperfectly appreciated, can he not console himself by observing the manner in which the quiet power, the manly strength, the patient forbearance, the sustained resolution, the unostentatious self-reliance, the exalted purpose, the unparalleled magnanimity, exhibited by the British People, have recently been maligned by the jealousy of alien and the animus of domestic critics? A writer who, after witnessing such a spectacle, can dwell on the supposed injustice done to his insignificant self, must have a very exaggerated estimate of his own importance and of that of his traducers. Would it not be wiser to cultivate indifference to the babel of utterances called Public Opinion, but which is in reality the opinion of no one who is independent, competent, and sincere, and merely 'what people think that other people think'; in other words, what nobody thinks? And now, good night! Let us meet again."

For a time we walked on in silence; and then, one after another, we spoke kindly things of him who had left us.

"Do you know," said Lamia to the Poet, perhaps half-unconsciously as an excuse for the

liking she had shown for our new acquaintance, "I almost think I see some points of resemblance between him and you."

"I should like to think, Lamia, you were right," was the reply. "His mind is a Haunt of Ancient Peace."

IV

The boat for a three days' river excursion that Veronica had arranged for us was ready, and so were we, except that Lamia was missing. When we go from home for enjoyment, or indeed when we remain there, we do not fuss over things insignificant, nor do we make ourselves slaves to twenty-four-hour clock-chains; and so Lamia's momentary absence was taken as all in the day's pastime, and we awaited her return with unruffled equanimity. I remember once saying to a friend, who had suffered many disappointments in life, and who at that moment was experiencing, together with myself, the result of a third person's carelessness, "It does not matter." He replied, "No, nothing matters." That sounded sad; and inwardly I did not assent to it. But I said nothing, for I felt it foreboded the end, which indeed very shortly came. But it is foolish, is it not, to make immaterial things matter; and

for a while we sate on the river bank, and watched and listened to the water flowing, flowing, flowing.

"I will answer for it," said Veronica, "she has gone to say good-bye to our host of last night."

"Likely enough," said the Poet; "our serviceable ambassadress to the last."

"Shall we," I suggested, "walk towards that wood which he mentioned as having a peculiar sylvan charm? A ten minutes' saunter, at most, would bring us there."

The calculation proved to be correct; and we had not got far into the wood, before, the first to catch the sound, I thought I heard Lamia's voice, and said so. A moment or two later we perceived our friend of the preceding evening leaning against the trunk of a hornbeam, and, overhearing the rustling sound made by us among the leaves of the undergrowth, he turned towards us, and laid his finger across his lips to warn us to move as quietly as possible. Lamia's voice was now audible to us all; and, advancing a few paces nearer, we perceived that she was seated on the ground, in an

open space of sward, and in a semicircle in front of her were a number of young girls, ranging from six to maybe eleven years of age, likewise seated.

"Tell me now," she said, "which of your lessons at school is it you like least."

After a short silence, evidently due to shyness rather than to hesitation, one of them answered:

"'Rithmetic!" And then one and all took up the cry, "Yes, Miss, 'rithmetic!"

"Arithmetic!" said Lamia. "Why, that is the most interesting of all studies."

That something in her voice, her look, her manner, in a word her personality, which draws other people to her, made them, too, instantly attentive; and she went on talking to them, in a familiar, simple way, that I fear it is given to few schoolmistresses to possess. "Let me show you how interesting Arithmetic is. It has to do, as you know, with numerals or numbers, and number is at the heart of everything. A very wise and gifted people, perhaps the most gifted that ever lived, and who were as great in their way, more than two thousand years ago, —you see I have to use numbers even in

alluding to them, — as England, whose children you are, is in its way to-day, thought so much of Arithmetic, which in their language signified the method or science of calculating, that they made it a part, not only of elementary, but of the very highest, education. For the same reason they looked on Music, which depends on number, as an indispensable part of everybody's training. You all like Music, do you not?"

"Oh yes, Miss," cried several of the young girls, "we all like Music."

"And Poetry too, I suppose?"

"Yes, Miss, and Poetry too." And three or four of them called out, "Oh, we *love* Poetry."

"Well, I will show you directly that Poetry, just as much as Music, depends on numbers, and could not exist without them; so much so that, once on a time, the word Poetry, and the word numbers, signified the same thing. A celebrated poet of our own island, who wrote two hundred years ago, speaking of himself, says:

I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came:

meaning, not that he said twice two are four, or eight and seven are fifteen, but that he wrote poetry when quite a little fellow. With the Greeks, of whom I was speaking to you just now, there were three Graces and nine Muses, and the Muses even came to be spoken and written of simply as *The Nine*. Even in prose, and the most prosaic prose, as in the hourly affairs of life, we cannot get along without numbers. You all know how many farthings there are in a penny, how many pennies in a shilling, how many shillings in a pound, how many furlongs in a mile, how many miles in a league, and so on. In other countries they count only by tens in dealing with money, distances, or weights; and that is the shortest and most convenient way of calculating. But we are a people who cling to old ways and customs; and so we calculate as our ancestors calculated, ever so long ago. But some of the greatest and most useful minds in the world occupy themselves almost entirely with numbers, for thus they learn and can tell us ever so much about the sun, and the moon, and the stars; for the planets travel in obedience to numbers,

which shows, does it not, that numbers and Arithmetic are part of the will and word of God. But now as to Music and Poetry. Without numbers or Arithmetic, as I have told you, there could be no Music, and no Poetry, indeed none of the Arts, and there would be nothing nice and beautiful in the world. I hope they teach you at school, and that you eagerly try to learn, pieces of poetry by heart; and I want you to listen to one I am going to recite, by one of the greatest of English Poets, far, far greater than the writers of verse who seem to-day to be popular favourites; for I want you to listen attentively, and to observe how the metre and music of the lines depend in no small degree on numbers or arithmetic. It is by Byron, is not in the smallest degree affected, is very simple, but very sublime, quite clear in meaning, and every word is in its natural and proper place. You remember how Belshazzar the King made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before them. Now listen: —

"In that same hour and hall,
The fingers of a hand

Came forth against the wall,
And wrote as if on sand :
The fingers of a man,
A solitary hand,
Along the letters ran,
And traced them like a wand.

"Chaldea's seers are good,
But here they have no skill ;
And the unknown letters stood
Untold and awful still.
And Babel's men of age
Are wise and deep in lore ;
But now they were not sage,
They saw, but knew no more.

"A captive in the land,
A stranger and a youth,
He heard the king's command,
He saw that writing's truth.
The lamps around were bright,
The prophecy in view ;
He read it on that night,
The morrow proved it true.

"'Belshazzar's grave is made,
His kingdom passed away,
He, in the balance weighed,
Is light and worthless clay.

The shroud, his robe of state,
His canopy the stone;
The Mede is at his gate!
The Persian on his throne!'

"You all, I am sure, feel the music, or numbers, of that. But, without numbers, there could not be any dancing, and that would be terrible, would it not? You all know how to dance, I am sure?"

"Yes, Miss, we can all dance."

"And sing?"

"Yes, yes, we can all sing."

"And I am sure you know several lines of verse that go with music, and that you can sing as well as recite."

"Oh yes, Miss, lots!"

"Then I think we had better, all of us, have a dance, and sing to our own dancing."

Thereupon Lamia rose to her feet, and the children promptly scrambled to theirs, took each other's little hands, all of them trying to get hold of Lamia's, and then began:

"Here we go round, and round, and round,
Here we go round and round."

Then our host of yesterday ran forward, and so did Veronica and the Poet, and so did I, and we all joined in the rustic roundelay. Then, growing bolder, they sang other words and another tune, but they were always words and tunes known to us all, as old as the hills, and much, much older than the oldest of the hornbeams that were looking on; and the five elder ones of us felt that we also were in Arcadia. At last we were fairly tired out, though the youngsters were not, and the circle was broken up; and Lamia and Veronica kissed them one and all, and they flowed and raced and chased after us, now in separate little rivulets, now in one united stream, till we reached the river and entered our Boat. And, by the river-side they kept on singing, and dancing, and kissing their hands; and the one solitary grown-up figure left on the bank said, "Dear folk! Come again!" and gazed after us till we were lost to his sight, and he to ours. But I know he will never forget us, nor we him, and that he will love Lamia for evermore.

* * * * * * *

If Lamia's object, in proposing what had

given us all, and gave us to the last, so much pleasure, had been to write or to enable some one else to write a book, we might perhaps have chosen an itinerary different from the one arranged for us by Veronica. But neither she, nor any of us, had such an end in view. We saw a score of places and a hundred things I have not even mentioned, and we had many talks I have not set down. Where we went seemed, to all but Veronica's directing mind, sheer haphazard; and I am aware that this record of our Autumn rambling is of the same fortuitous character. The persons who spare you nothing, in telling you what they have been doing, and what has happened to them, are generally rather tiresome. It would take far more than a few weeks to see all the Haunts of Ancient Peace in our Island, and many a volume to describe them. We were three days on the river; but if you do not hurry from place to place, and take things as they come, and row or float along at an easy unanxious pace, you will traverse many a reach, and will round many a winding curve, that to the curious but unloving eye will seem samesome. To us none of them

seemed so; for they are so various in reality, and we were so thoroughly in the mood to appreciate them all. Villages, hamlets, cathedrals, abbey ruins, there were none quite on the river banks; but in our smoothly silent course we descried many a country seat, abiding, as it had abided for generations, amid its woods; many a church-tower and vicarage or rectory half hidden by the untrimmed timber that lent it further beauty and dignity; many a farmstead with its weather-ripened roof, its newly thatched yellow stacks, its flocks, herds, and pastures. We passed under the low arches of old stone bridges as picturesque as they were unpretentious, with the "Trout," "Maybush," or "Hawthorn" Inn, at either end, half smothered in late clambering roses or rampant honeysuckle; through furlong after furlong of tall grasses, reeds, and reed-mace, with willow-wrens, and many another river-bird diving in and out of them, and continuous avenues of willow-weed and meadowsweet; and, as we quietly rowed past one of these, Lamia repeated to us the following poem, the authorship of which will easily be surmised:

WILLOWWEED AND MEADOWSWEET

I

Into untethered bark we stepped,
When the winds and waters slept,
In the silvery-curtained swoon
Of the languid afternoon,
Floating on 'twixt shore and shore,
Without rudder, sail, or oar;
Nothing stirring, nothing doing,
Save white clouds white clouds pursuing,
And the ringdove's lovelong cooing;
Skirting with slow swan-like feet
Willowweed and meadowsweet.

II

So we glided, on and on,
Till the sunset glow was gone,
And athwart the stirless air
Nothing was save here and there
Undulating gossamer;
Skirting without noise or speed
Meadowsweet and willowweed.

III

Then the twilight, wimpled nun,
Lit the starlamps, one by one,
That adoring gaze might see

Night's mysterious sanctuary,
And the earth-bound spirit share
In the heavenly whispered prayer
Planet unto planet saith,
Prayer of trusting love and faith.
O, if Life could only fleet
'Twixt willowweed and meadowsweet!

The first day, indeed the very first hour, of our journey, Lamia had stipulated, if you remember, that we should see and concern ourselves with nothing that was not old. It was to be a peaceful excursion through Old England. I almost think our halting-place at the end of the first day of our betaking ourselves to the water fulfilled her Ideal more than any other; while the Poet frankly said it came nearest to his, and Veronica more than once declared that it was not only most attractive, but absolutely faultless. As for me, when they are satisfied so am I; and, if I were not, it would be immaterial. It counts, at most, some fifteen hundred folk; and its squares, which are not squares, but only open green spaces, and its streets, which resemble streets nowhere else, are broad, shady, noiseless, and

spotlessly clean. I have never seen another so sweet-smelling an assemblage of habitations; and its one Inn, though it still keeps to that modest appellation, can take in a fair number of guests, for it is a fishing headquarters in the angling season, and is withal so quiet and homelike, that Lamia expressed a desire to live there always. The stream that draws rod and line thither in the Mayfly season and the four or five weeks following, flows narrowly and windingly through the meadows and pastures south of the little town, which has shops just sufficient to supply the elementary wants of life, and no more. There are no unlovely, obtrusive advertisements to call attention to anything in particular, no untidiness, no noise for the mere sake of being noisy. Even the children, though they appear as happy, and as unconcerned save with the passing moment, as they are elsewhere, run and skip and play without unnecessary shouting, as though they also had a half-conscious feeling of the sweet sanctity of the place. For the heart and soul of it is the Church, which, when you approach it through a placid God's-acre of weather-

mellowed tombstones and rose-bushes, you declare to be of the fifteenth century, till you get closer; and then, if you are in ever so small a way skilled in such matters, you perceive that portions of it belong to a century earlier, and, finally, you surmise that some of the Tower is of the thirteenth, and find, on due scrutiny, the surmise is correct.

"Is this old enough for you, Lamia?"

"Oh yes!" she answered. "And how one wishes one had, like it, lived and looked on life through the same space of time!"

"And so you have," said the Poet, "if, as I hope and believe, you have often communed, in a sufficiently well-stocked imagination, with this dear land of ours ever since the days of Fair Rosamund. What an absorbing story! What a long and varied tale of tenderness and strength, of poetry and statecraft, of undaunted men and entrancing women, of young Harrys with their beavers on, of Percys, Hotspurs, and king-making Warwicks, of Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and all their offspring touched with hallowed fire, of saints and holy worshippers too good and meek and pious ever to have been

heard of save in the locality and time they redeemed with their goodness, of duty-fulfilling country squires, burly yeomen, law-revering burghers, well-fed, steadfast-working, sound-sleeping labourers, disorder-detesting housewives, and happy, mischievous, but not disobedient children; a world of folk uncommonly like the best of ourselves to-day!"

But, time-obliterating as the old Church is to linger in, alike without and within, its chief treasure, on which the gaze soon gets fastened, is its stained glass, the date and story whereof even the most erudite can only guess at. There are legends and traditions concerning it; but to us, more anxious to feel than to know, to love than to learn, save in respect of such learning as loving can impart, the haziness of these was not only immaterial, but what we preferred. In silence we looked on, in silence we contemplated, each window in succession, each compartment, and square, and lead-framed circle and curve, perfect here, imperfect there from injury or loss, here restored, there in colour wanting altogether, where surmise concerning the original had wholly failed.

It seems incredible that any one should ever have been so consumed with acrimonious zeal as to desire to destroy things so beautiful; beautiful of their kind, we all declared, beyond anything we had seen at Spoleto, or indeed anywhere south of the Alps. But thus runs the story: that, in order to save the glass from the fury of inconoclastic frenzy, it was removed, carefully hidden, and only placed here again when the flames of fanaticism had somewhat died down. I remember, especially, one peculiarly touching figure in the rendering of "The Last Judgment," long anterior to Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel, and not so much later than that attributed to Orcagna in Santa Maria Novella in Florence. It was that of Mary Magdalen, kneeling in prayer before a Crucifix, in Purgatory, with her golden hair falling over her shoulders, so transported by her devotions that not only was she insensible to Purgatorial pains, but was not even aware that the hour of pardon and peace had come. But an angel is on his way to touch and tell her, and to summon her to go to Him who said, "Her sins are forgiven, for she loved much."

As at last we passed out of this holy place, slowly and reluctantly, a stranger who was about to enter it, looked hard, as the saying is, at the Poet, and then addressed him:

"You and your friends are, I guess, indeed I know, native to this lovely island of yours. Perhaps you perceive I am not." That was just perceptible in an intonation slightly different from ours, but quite as good in its own way, and always welcome to the wisely listening ear, for it tells of a kindred people who speak the same tongue as ours; and who, though born and reared so far away, think much the same things, and would fain fashion the world in much the same manner. "I have come, not for the first time, to wander through the old country, where we find so much we like and long for, and have not yet got at home. Of all the places I have seen, I think this one gives me, and the members of my family, who are about somewhere, the most complete and compact impression, so to say, of what I mean, and I suspect you mean, by England. Ha! Here they are!"

As he said it, two alert, attractive-looking

girls, a young fellow radiating intelligence, and a sweet-faced seriously gazing woman of middle years, evidently their mother, turned an angle of the church, and joined us.

"Here are my girls," he said; "my son, who is having the only holiday he will have for a long time, and last but not least, anyway to me, their mother."

Thereupon Veronica, on her side, was equally communicative, and we all fell to talking.

"Yes, sir, we all feel it," said our new acquaintance before we parted. "We love our own country, and we are proud of it; some of us, as I daresay some of you are, perhaps a little too proud. But the old country has got one thing the new one has not, but which we feel as much as you do, maybe more, because we have not got it, charm, the charm of ancientness, of having a lot behind it, of having been in the world a long, long time."

"Yet," said Lamia, who overheard the words, though most of her attention had been claimed by the daughters, "here are two members of your family that have not been very long in

the world, yet are not without the spell of which you speak so tenderly."

"I guess," said their father, "that must be, Miss, because, at some time or another a little way back, they had the same forbears as you."

"That may conceivably be," said the Poet; "but we are quite ready to believe, as we are in the habit of thinking, it is entirely of native growth in your own land. We see so many of your women folk who are charming, and I have had the pleasure of meeting a number of your men whose minds are equally so."

"I see you understand us," was the reply, "if perhaps a bit poetically. But I want to say a word to you before we take farewell. I want to thank you, sir, not for myself only, but for a number of my countrymen, for something you once wrote, it must now be hard on five years ago. As far as I know, it was the first clear English expression of an earnest desire that your country and ours should be right down good friends, and always pull together. It might sound presumptuous if I expressed any opinion as to the literary quality

of what you said. But it went straight home to the hearts of thousands of our people."

"I had," said the Poet, "many most kindly letters from your country concerning it."

"I just guess you had. But what I most want to say to you is this." Here he grasped the Poet's hand. "I know you are an out-and-out Britisher, from kernel to crackle; and so I tell you that, though I think, after the sample the people of the British Isles and all your fellow-folk beyond the Seas have recently given the world of their mettle, there is no Power, nor combine of powers, will be in a mighty hurry to tackle you, for any reason whatever, and what is more, if they did, you and yours would, I suspect, be more than a match for them. Yet, if they did, and you seemed to be for a moment in a tight place, just you wire a rhyme or two under the two or three thousand miles of water that join, not separate, us; and if the Old Country's cause be, as I don't doubt it would be, a just one, and one making for freedom and what's right, Northern grit, Southern chivalry, and Backwoods ready-handedness will come to you, and see you through with

it; for we know you would do the same by us."

"Be quite sure," said the Poet, "we should."

Then cordial farewells were spoken all round; and the last words uttered were by the young girls of Lamia.

"Isn't she just lovely?"

By which we all understood that they meant, as the words would have meant with us in Elizabethan days, that Lamia was beyond words lovable.

* * * * * * *

So we journeyed on peacefully through a land of peace, that seemed to have been there from all time, and as though it would for all time endure; a land that changes so slowly and so gradually that it hardly seems to change at all, and to have behind its Present, whose movement is but the regularly recurring round of the rustic seasons, a great back-ground of the silent Past, from which it is directly descended, say, since the days of Alfred, who laid the foundations of the orderly and law-respecting

England we know to-day. To us, moving through it thus tranquilly, contentedly, it appeared all the more peaceful, because of the world-wide Imperial Peace that had lately been concluded. We needed to see no news-sheets; for strife, victories, reverses, resolute will that obliterated the one, and harvested the fruit of the other, together with thanksgiving Ceremonials for deliverance from War, for the beginning of a new Reign, and the acclaimed home-coming of patient intrepid warriors, now lay behind us, and the most important things in life were again sunshine and fair weather, the record of harvested fields and swelling roots, and the domestic happiness of mankind. We passed through hamlets nestling in hollow or ascending hill-slope, with their comely old-fashioned cottages set back a little way from the road, and their strips and squares of bright-looking sweet-smelling gardens. Sometimes we stayed our steps, to enter country churches in whose contemplative interiors preparations were being made to celebrate the conclusion of Harvest. Inside their porches was a notification that on

such and such a day a Harvest Home Festival would be held in the old Tithe Barn. Fruit, vegetables, and little golden sheaves of newly ripened wheat or oats were deftly intertwined with autumn flowers, and were looped round pulpit or drooped in graceful festoons from porch to pillar. In their churchyards, haunts indeed of ancient peace, there seemed to be more gardens than graves, which led Lamia to remind us of the following lines:

Let not the roses lie
  Too thickly tangled round my tomb,
Lest fleecy clouds that skim the summer sky,
Flinging their faint soft shadows, pass it by,
  And know not over whom.

And let not footsteps come
  Too frequent to my couch of rest.
Should I — who knoweth? — not be deaf, though dumb,
Bird's idle pipe, or bee's laborious hum,
  Would suit me, listening, best.

And, pray you, do not hew
  Words to excite a smile or sneer;
But only carve, at least if they be true,
These simple words, or some such, and as few,
  "He whom we loved, lies here."

And if you will but so
This last request of mine fulfil,
I will be mindful of your joy and woe,
And, if I can but help you where I go,
Be sure, fond friends, I will.

In some of the villages through which we passed at a foot's pace, lest we should lose anything of their unobtrusive beauty, it was the electoral day for some Parish Council or Board of Guardians, and, during the dinner hour, labouring voters were passing in and out of the polling-places; but it was all done so quietly that it needed to know something of the kindly, practical temperament of our reasonable race, to be aware that anything beyond the ordinary routine of hamlet life was going on. In many of them was a row of old-world alms-houses, having on them some suggestive far-off date, of Elizabethan or Jacobean days; and, outside them, on bench or settle, sate among bee-hives and dahlias old men who seemed to have been born much about the same time. The mellow tranquillity of autumn appeared to have fallen even upon the children, who were less obstreperously voiceful than is their wont. Perhaps

it was that Autumn had brought them an unusual amount of fruit to occupy themselves with, pears, apples, plums, nuts, and blackberries. Many a healthy little face, and carefully washed, tenderly-trimmed pinafore, was stained, but in no way spoilt, by the crimson juice of these, in rambling among which they had doubtless passed a goodly part of the morning; and the sight of them made one long to be young again oneself, and to go blackberrying in the meandering meadow-bordering lanes. There was not a village, and scarcely a house, we passed, but had its clambering vine, and bright little territory of flowers. The feudal fronts of the proud, and the honeysuckled porches of the lowly, all alike seemed Haunts of Ancient Peace, all dwelling comely and secure, under the gentle, unfelt, but continuing and irresistible rule of the paternal Past.

* * * * * * *

"I suppose," said Lamia, "I am like the occupants of our stables. Constantly fidgeting to leave their stalls, they are yet more anxious to return to them. So, after three weeks of vagrant enjoyment, I return, with something

more than resignation, to the Garden That We Love."

The above was in answer to the reminder, on my part, of her professed weariness with it; for, now more than any of us, she seemed to rejoice in our home-coming and our return to the stationary seclusion that is our usual condition. We found less change than I had expected; partly perhaps because the season had moved on without either parching heat or injurious rain, and partly, maybe, because our home somehow has an air of having always been there, and it needs the revolutionary winter months noticeably to change it. In a well-ordered garden, where foresight is habitually present, the ostensible difference between what it looks like at the beginning of September, and then again towards Michaelmas, is but slight. The colours perhaps are richer and riper at the later than the earlier date, and it requires an eye very observant of detail to note that Autumn is of her hectic beauty dying. The weather was still warm and windless, and we could sit out without any feeling of damp or discomfort, and talk over all we had seen.

"It is so," said the Poet, echoing a declaration of Veronica's, that, of all lands, England is the most delightful to roam about in. "There is in it all one wants: beauty, variety, comeliness, commodiousness, hill and valley, meadow, cornfield, and pasture; park, woodland, homestead, here splendid, there simple, both equally appealing to the imagination and the affections; stream, river, ruin, lake, hamlet, cathedral, wide wild uncultivated spaces, commons of golden gorse, rustic inns, rectories and alms-houses, honest and not ill-paid labour, happy-looking cottages, a kindly and contented people. Above all, it has the abiding charm of that Ancientness we went forth, at Lamia's wish, to see, and which we found in such abundance. Dear, old, but withal ever youthful, England! pondering on the Past, but ready for resolute action, should danger or difficulty call for it. It is a Haunt of Ancient Peace. May it ever remain so!"

THE GARDEN THAT I LOVE

By ALFRED AUSTIN

POET LAUREATE

Cloth. Crown 8vo. $2.50

With Fourteen Illustrations

"'The Garden that I Love,' by Alfred Austin, is the work of a poet, artist, and gardener, who, having had the great luck to meet with an ideal house, surrounded it with an ideal garden. How this house and garden formed a convenient meeting place for 'friends in council,' and what these friends said and did, till the garden that they loved became the garden in which they loved, and the happy termination of their labours and loves, is most pleasantly told by Mr. Austin." — *Guardian.*

"Scarcely has the reader got through half a dozen pages of this bright little book before he finds himself on terms of close friendship with the author. Mr. Austin takes you at once into his confidence — or at least he appears to do so: he tells you by what good fortune he chanced to light upon his rural retreat; he lets you pry into the details of his domestic arrangements; and then, taking you kindly by the hand, goes with you round the Garden that he Loves. Month after month, from April till October, he depicts his garden in varying phase; but, whatever its aspect, he somehow contrives to make the reader a partner in the simple pleasure which it yields. It is true that one is never quite sure, when listening to a poet, how far his descriptions are a direct reflex of the concrete, and how far the creation of his own imaginings. But no matter: whether real or imaginary, Mr. Austin's descriptions of his garden are equally delightful. . . . The volume is one which will be heartily enjoyed by every cultured reader. He who opens its pages shall find enshrined in them many a sage apophthegm, many a sparkling bit of dialogue, and many a verse of tenderness and grace." — *Academy.*

"The freshness of the morning sunlight, the perfume of the flowers, the songs of the birds, the sense of tranquil leisure, are in this volume side by side with the companionship of pleasant women and of books, an air of culture, a gay philosophy of life, a dash of old-fashioned gallantry, and the give and take of happy humour. . . . There is much else in the book over which we could gladly linger; for neither the Garden that was Loved, nor the love that was returned in its privacy of shade, exhaust the charm of this wholesome, imaginative, and genial outlook on nature and on life." — *Standard.*

"Mr. Austin's good fortune has proved the exceeding good fortune of his readers; for never surely was the sense of the blessed beneficence of a garden, its boon of peace and refreshment to the spirit, expounded with more winning charm, or with more delicate truth of sentiment, than in this intimate and tender discourse about the Garden that he Loves. In no kind of writing, perhaps, than in this is it easier to miss just that *nuance* of tone and treatment that makes the difference between literature and twaddle. In these pleasant pages that *nuance* is most delicately apprehended. They are written not in poetic prose, but in prose that is essentially the prose of a poet, with the feeling and fancy of the poet. There is just the right mingling of actual poetry, just so much as to make us long for more; and the snatches of verse introduced are in themselves most exquisite — it may be that their charm is heightened by their setting, but one does not remember verse of Mr. Austin's that has charmed one more. There is sentiment enough to give life to the garden lore, and enough garden lore to give character to the sentiment. . . . Mr. Austin has seldom given us anything better than this delightful book. It is certainly one not to be missed by any lover of Nature — or any lover of graceful and charming prose." — *St. James's Gazette.*

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

66 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

IN VERONICA'S GARDEN

By ALFRED AUSTIN

POET LAUREATE

Cloth. Crown 8vo. $2.50

With Fourteen Illustrations

"Those who wander with Mr. Alfred Austin in 'Veronica's Garden' will be glad to find that it is none other than the Garden that he Loves. Not only is the place the same, but the company remains unchanged. Veronica is here again with her grave imperiousness and sweet addiction to household cares, and the playful Lamia is by her side trembling in mock earnest at her nod. He who tells the tale — the Keeper, shall we call him? of the pleasaunce — has lost nothing of his meditative delight in the infinite mutations of its loveliness, and the Poet comes back from Italy full of apt Virgilian learning, and ready at every turn to burst into English song that has a classic grace and freshness of its own. How much is fancy and how much portraiture? Where does the writer put himself into his record, and where is he content, with dainty dramatic touch, to furnish side lights to the picture of sincere and enthusiastic feeling? These are questions we do not care to ask, even if we believed that we could give dogmatic answers. The mind must be singularly ill-attuned to the finer spirit of the workmanship, which worries itself with analysis of this sort. It is enough to accept the volume gratefully as a delightful blending of the results of delicate observation and subtle thought with humour both kindly and refined. The dignity and rhythmical melodiousness of the prose would tell us, if we did not know in other ways, that the writer of this volume is a poet." — *Standard.*

"Mr. Austin, in giving us this book, has essayed to do an exquisite thing twice, and though some, who like to have enjoyed their sensation and be done with it, may grumble, others will thank him for this further instalment of quiet days and quiet ways. The charm of his subject lies upon the book, so that even the list of flower-names becomes fragrant. . . . A delightful book." — *Speaker.*

"This delightful volume has the full and fresh charm of 'The Garden that I Love.'" — *St. James's Budget.*

"A delightful book, which will be cordially welcomed by those who enjoyed 'The Garden that I Love.' It has no mission, settles no problems, and is content to be charming, simple, and pleasure-giving." — *National Review.*

"Mr. Alfred Austin, in 'Veronica's Garden,' continues his praises of 'The Garden that I Love.' Once more he celebrates the delights of that secluded spot, the high walls of which shut out the 'ephemeral fret, fume, and turmoil of to-day,' and enclose a thousand simple enchantments; once more in those shaded walks and radiant borders we meet the perverse and lovely Lamia, the solicitous Veronica, the Poet whose verse gives the kindling touch that draws us into closer amity with the life of nature. Again it is the lover and tender of the garden that is the narrator. White of Selborne was not more precise than is Mr. Austin in noting the advent and ways of the blossoms and birds, or in observing the wayward, laggard, or hurrying steps of the season. The friends converse on many themes, — on art, on the philosophy of life; their banter is gay and genial, their gravity never deepens into gloom. The poet quotes much from his favourite Virgil, and sings in graceful lyrics of the simple things of nature, of love, of friendship. He is the same gentle Conservative and patriot; the old faiths, the old ways, are dear to him,

> And every wildling bird and leaf
> That gladdens English lanes.

His verse has the sincerity and spontaneity the talk of the friends sometimes lacks; and the note rings true that tells,

> I would live nestled near my kind,
> Deep in a garden garth,
> That they who loved my verse might find
> A pathway to my hearth.

The beautiful old manor house and the garden are charmingly represented in the illustrations by A. Kohl and O. Lacour." — *Daily News.*

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

66 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

LAMIA'S WINTER QUARTERS

A SEQUEL TO "THE GARDEN THAT I LOVE"

By ALFRED AUSTIN

POET LAUREATE

Cloth. Crown 8vo. $2.50

With Fourteen Illustrations

"Its imaginative atmosphere, its feeling and suggestion, are, as in the case of its predecessor, in the highest degree poetic; and the grace and wit and wisdom of its prose narrative and colloquies are diversified by lyrics of singular sweetness and charm. . . . These idyllic colloquies under an Italian sky form a rich and effective setting for the lyrical jewels with which they are studded. . . . Gems of verse." — *Literature.*

"Great charm." — *Times.*

"From the poetical 'Invocation' addressed to the Queen, with which the book begins, to the lyric, 'Good Night,' with which it ends, the volume is charming. We have here all Mr. Austin's suavity of diction and delicacy of sentiment, the artistic pleasure in the beautiful, the true poet's delight in Italy, which, taken together, make a piece of prose which, in its way, . . . is as near perfect as may be." — *St. James's Gazette.*

"Charming verses." — *Spectator.*

"We are never bored throughout all these delightful pages. We live on a level of distinguished thoughts, expressed with elegance and refinement." — *Daily Telegraph.*

"The poetical atmosphere of the book, with its fresh sympathy for Italian scenery, rural life, and manners, makes it delightful reading. Over and above all this, there are the lyrics and pastoral poems, which, thanks to the interposition of the poet, brighten these pages and include some of the choicest pieces which have fallen from Mr. Austin's pen." — *Daily News.*

"A most exquisite book. We prefer it even to 'The Garden that I Love.' Some of the lyrics may bear comparison with the best lyrical productions of Wordsworth, Tennyson, or Browning." — *Westminster Review.*

"The third member of a delightful series. Neither in 'The Garden that I Love' nor in 'In Veronica's Garden' was Mr. Austin better inspired." — *Literary World.*

"Mr. Austin's best descriptive and reflective manner." — *Standard.*

"Full of fascinating Nature-pictures." — *Leeds Mercury.*

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

66 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

Elizabeth and Her German Garden

Illustrated Edition. Crown 8vo. Cloth extra. $2.50
Regular Edition. Crown 8vo. Cloth. $1.75
Cheap Edition. 16mo. Cloth. 50 cents

A new edition, containing considerable matter not included in the original issue, and illustrated with a large number of full-page photogravure plates.

These illustrations are from photographs taken in and about the garden, and will be found to form a most interesting and valuable accompaniment to the text.

"What a captivating book it is — how merry and gentle and sunny, how whimsically wise and tender! There is real humor in these pages, and for that reason, if for no other, it deserves to live. The new chapter, describing the author's pious pilgrimage to the garden of her childhood, is inimitable in its way, and should not be missed by any admirer of this most winning Elizabeth."

— *New York Tribune.*

"Elizabeth is pure sunshine and without a shadow, the reflection, as it were, of a quiet existence, and never a commonplace one; for, without knowing it or suspecting it, she is an idealist. Elizabeth never tires, for has she not her husband, her little ones, and her books to talk about? These passages, as found in 'Elizabeth' in the quiet history of a woman's life, act as useful tonics or are the necessary sedatives in our somewhat fevered existence."

— *New York Times.*

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
66 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

The Solitary Summer

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"ELIZABETH AND HER GERMAN GARDEN," ETC.

Illustrated Edition. Crown 8vo. Cloth extra. $2.50
Regular Edition. Crown 8vo. Cloth. $1.50

"'The Solitary Summer' affords a generous harvest of beautiful and poetic thoughts, together with some keen observations of life, all of which are expressed in a graceful and supple prose. . . . It is a privilege to have stood for a time upon the veranda steps and to have caught a glimpse of that sane refuge." — *Chicago Tribune.*

"Full of sunshine and fresh breezes, riotous with the bloom and fragrance of flowers, spicy with the damp cool breath of pines. . . . The quaint, whimsical fancies of a cultivated, lovable woman create a golden atmosphere through which we see her life, and we dream with her on her bench in her garden, in the fields where the yellow lupins grow, and in the mossy deeps of the pine forest. We feel we have made another friend, one who sees life with gentle, smiling eyes and from a deliciously humorous point of view." — *Recreation.*

"A garden of absorbing interest to its owner, a library full of books to comfort rainy days, a hamlet of German peasants, three delightful babies, and a 'man of wrath' who by no means merits the title, — these are the simple elements from which a bright woman, too cosmopolitan to be thought wholly German, as she calls herself, has evolved a charming little book." — *The Nation.*

"She has a depth of feeling, a sense of humor, and an impetuous and ardent manner that make her chronicles thoroughly alive. Beside this lovable book other feminine essays on nature, literature, and life seem only tame and artificial performances."

— *New York Tribune.*

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
66 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

JESS

BITS OF WAYSIDE GOSPEL

By JENKIN LLOYD JONES

Cloth. 12mo. $1.50

"There is much that is likable and admirable in this book, and it would be well if more of its kind could be written. The spirit of the author is the sort of influence which ought to shape American life." — *The Times*, Washington.

"The author calls them 'out-of-doors sermons,' and if all sermons that we hear indoors were like them, the power of the pulpit would not be the discredited thing it now is. . . . From the opening paper . . . he never fails to teach the great lesson of 'the things that matter.' Such an essay as that in this volume on 'The Peace of God' is alone worth the price of the book." — *News and Courier*, Charleston.

"Full of light, of sweetness, of love, not large or pretentious in any way." — *Toledo Daily Blade.*

"The author's keen observation and wholesome liking for all living things are delightful, and he has a rare talent for infusing wit and interest into situations that to a person of smaller soul would be dully commonplace. He does not go out of his way to narrate abnormal occurrences. Still, many of his descriptions are of places deep buried from the ordinary paths of travel, and all of them are fresh and pleasant. But whatever scenes he has chosen, he has put a zest, a largeness, into humble life that make his accounts most practical and restful and desirable." — *The Beacon*, Boston.

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

66 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK.

THE GARDEN OF A COMMUTER'S WIFE

RECORDED BY THE GARDENER

With Eight Photogravure Illustrations

Cloth. 12mo. $1.50

"'The Garden of a Commuter's Wife' is a legend that gives no hint of the wit and wisdom and graceful phrase within its covers. The Commuter's charming woman writes of her suburban garden, her original servants, and various other incidents which come in the course of living in a thoroughly human way. She reminds one of Elizabeth of 'German Garden' fame in more ways than one, but being American she is broader, more versatile and humorous, if not also more poetic. It breathes an air of cheery companionship, of flowers, birds, all nature, and the warm affection of human friendship. Its philosophy is wholesome, unselfish, and kindly, and the Commuter's Wife, who writes her own memoirs, is one we would be glad to number among our friends." — *Chicago Post.*

"By the inevitable action and reaction so interesting to watch, these books will undoubtedly in their term stimulate many a woman who possesses a small plot of ground, the charms and possibilities of which she now only meagrely appreciates, to 'go and do likewise.' Which will be an excellent thing for the woman herself, as well as for the professional gardeners whom our new schools will raise up to pull their dilettante sisters out of bogs." — *Boston Budget.*

"In brief, the book is delightfully sketchy and chatty, thoroughly feminine and entrancing. The writer represents herself as a doctor's daughter in a country town, who has married an Englishman, and after two years abroad has come home to live. Both husband and wife prefer the country to the city, and they make of their modes' estate a mundane paradise of which it is a privilege to have a glimpse. Surely it is no exaggeration to characterize this as one of the very best books of the holiday season thus far." — *Providence Journal.*

"It is written with charm and is more than a mere treatise on what may be raised in the small lot of the suburban resident.

"The author has not only learned to appreciate nature from intimate association, but has achieved unusual power of communicating these facts to others. There is something unusually attractive about the book."

— *The Philadelphia Inquirer.*

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

66 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK